

Mark me Present

By: Sam Prescott

Sam Prescott is a sophomore in the class of 2028 at NC State University. He is majoring in fisheries, wildlife, and conservation biology with a concentration in wildlife sciences. He has a passion for the outdoors and conservation that leads him to pursue academic interests in forestry, wildlife management, and public relations to inform others of conservation.

Wow, just wow! I'm not really sure where to begin. This trip was eye-opening, insightful, and a downright blast. From riding the subway for the first time, to the skyline views from the Rockefeller building at dusk, every detail, every moment was a memory that will last me a lifetime.

New York City has one of the richest cultures within the United States. It's large urban atmosphere with endless streets and concrete symbolizes American pride. But that pride truly starts a little bit beyond the harbor. Here Lady Liberty shines brightly as an elegant beacon reminding Americans of hope, freedom, and a sense of pride. This same symbol meant so much more though to the ones who came before my time. The Statue of Liberty stands firm as if she is guarding a small island right behind her. That little island being Ellis Island. The island where so many got a fresh new start into the American dream. When touring Ellis Island, I wished I could have gone back in time to witness it firsthand. Witness the first ship being unloaded, filled with those looking for a better life. Just being on this historic ground gave me insight to what early life in the United States looked like to a newly arrived foreigner starting over. I may not be a foreigner, but I was completely new to the setting of a city this large and the culture surrounding it. It seemed as if touring Ellis Island started a new beginning within me as well, one that set my eyes on an empowering trip.

Fast forward through the weekend, I walked through museums, central park, by memorials, and ate some unbelievably delicious New York City cuisine. This was my first time in New York. At first, I wasn't quite sure what I would be getting myself into. Looking back now, I would go on this trip again in a heartbeat. I discovered something about myself. I discovered how to truly be present in the moment. So often nowadays, we just want to rush from one thing to the next. We live in the moment, but we are not always present in it. I was present in New York. I wanted to experience it all, although, I was fine avoiding large rats. From every bite of food to every step I took trying to avoid bumping into people in times square, I did so with intention. As a result, I could think

clearly, and my stress levels were at an all-time low. I wish we could have spent a whole week in the city; I enjoyed these moments that much.

Coming back home I realized the true impact that this trip had on me. Never taking the things, I get to do for granted. This trip was a once in a college time experience. I met new friends, experienced a new culture, and made memories that will never go away as long as I live. Being present in the opportunities that I had while there influenced every bit of my being. When thinking about this trip, I can't stop smiling and reminiscing over the journey it led me on. A journey of self-reflection, growth, and a new passion for New York cheesecake, I mean, wow it was delicious.

If anyone is ever debating whether to undertake a trip like this with Caldwell Fellows, I would recommend it to all. Even if they may be skeptical about its influence at first, just go. Go experience new cultures and regions. Go experience making memories with new friends. Go experience a moment where one can simply slow down and be present in life. Life goes by too fast for us not to enjoy life every now and again. And a trip like this truly reminds you of how to enjoy every little detail.