



St Stithians Girls College – Johannesburg, South Africa
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When I was in grade 9, I had the opportunity to spend eight weeks in Johannesburg, South Africa attending St Stithians Girls College. The time that I spent in South Africa was unforgettable. It allowed me to explore a new and fascinating country, form new friendships and develop my independence.

The city of Johannesburg, more commonly known to locals as Jo'burg or Jozi, is the largest city in South Africa with a population of almost eight million people. While Johannesburg is not the capital of South Africa, it is the capital of the province of Gauteng. Johannesburg offers many cultural attractions such as the Apartheid Museum, the Mandela Museum, which is located in Nelson Mandela's former home, and Gold Reef City, a former mining town which has now turned into a theme park. It was also a host city for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Johannesburg is only 25 kilometres from the Cradle of Humankind, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is only 50 kilometres from Pretoria, the country's capital.

St Stithians, commonly referred to as Saints by the students, is very different than LCC. Saints is a Methodist Church school, and while they do have chapel two times a week, religion is not incorporated into the classes. At first, the idea of going to chapel during school seemed foreign to me and I was a bit uncomfortable with it, especially since I am Jewish, but I quickly became accustomed to it. It was also made clear to me that while I should attend chapel, I was not obligated to participate in any of the services. Another difference between Saints and LCC is that while Saints does offer both a boys and a girls college, the schools are physically separated and the classes are not coed. Furthermore, since South Africa is in the southern hemisphere, they have a different school year than we do. Rather than running from September to June, the school runs year round with three month-long breaks.

My experience at St Stithians was excellent. When I first arrived, I was given the option to select my courses and this allowed me to try subjects that I otherwise wouldn't have selected at LCC. I was also given the opportunity to participate in one of the sports teams which included netball, soccer and field hockey. I joined the field hockey team and though I was by no means skilled in this sport, it was a great way opportunity to meet people and make new friends. The teachers at the school also organized several trips for the exchange students, which included an outing to the Apartheid Museum and Sterkfontein and a trip to a local charity which provided employment for mentally disabled people. All in all, the teachers and students at Saints were extremely nice and truly made me feel at home while at the school.

Overall, my time in South Africa was amazing. It was incredible to have the chance to fully immerse myself in a foreign culture and it was extremely eye-opening. I will never forget all of the fascinating people I met and all of the friendships that I was able to form. I highly encourage people to involve themselves in the exchange programme and would definitely recommend St Stithians as a host school.