

# All aboard the Leeuwin

By Anna Gray



**Anna is 22 from Western Australia and had the wonderful opportunity to go away on the Leeuwin Ultimate Challenge trip. The STS Leeuwin II is the largest sail-training ship in Australia based in Fremantle, Western Australia. It is owned and operated by Leeuwin Ocean Adventure Foundation who is a Registered Accredited Provider of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. <https://sailleuwin.com/> She shares her amazing experience with us.**

I went on the tall ship Leeuwin for four nights and five days.

I didn't know anybody so was feeling nervous plus I had never been on a ship before. Once I met my group, I felt better but was still a little unsure. I was in the white team and our watch leader was Cody who was a sailor.

On the first day before the ship left, we did some training. We pretended to steer the ship and wore our harnesses which kept us safe. We had to wear our harnesses when we were on deck so if we fell overboard we wouldn't be lost. We learnt about the ropes and sails and then we sailed just off the coast for the night. Many times during the trip we had to number off to make sure we were all there. My number was 10.

The other people on board were so nice and we learnt about each other's experiences. At night we all sang along with a guitar and played card games like UNO which I loved. There was a lot of laughs.

Cody taught us how to climb the mast, but first we had to pass the hang test. This meant that our feet were dangling above the deck and we had to hang on to a mast for 15 seconds. One of the instructors had a timer. I was nervous at the start, but I was fine. When we got to 15 seconds the instructor yelled 'Done!' Phew now I could climb the mast. On day three in the afternoon we all had a go at climbing the mast. I was sooo scared. Cody was beside me the whole way and told me it would be scary for a bit, but I would get the hang of it! I asked him if I was going to die and he said there was nothing to be worried about because I had a harness and he told me I could do it. I climbed up to the platform and touched it. I felt really happy and excited and everyone clapped and cheered for me because I was really brave. I was really proud of myself.

Cody also taught us how to clean the decks with scrubbing brushes, about the braces which is pulling the ropes, so the sails go up and down. In the olden days the crew would say '2 – 6 – Heave' so we did this too. We laughed.

Another time I went on the roped net at the bow of the ship. (I learnt some seafaring words!) It was scary because there was only ocean below the net, and I could see the blue as I climbed on it. We had to fold a sail and we did it. I conquered my fears.

One very cool activity was where we had to make a special aircraft with an egg in it so when we dropped the aircraft from half way up the mast the egg landed



safely. We put newspaper around ours and taped it with sticks as well. Our egg won as it didn't smash. Some people had hard boiled eggs. We worked as a team and won a small bar of chocolate. We broke it into bits and gobbled it up.

Happy hour was cleaning. We had to clean downstairs on the starboard side, the midship area and the port side with a cloth and make sure the bunks were clean. It was great fun because there was loud music like *Here comes the sun*, and opera too. I started singing opera and everyone told me I should be an opera singer.

I slept on a skinny little bunk bed with 2 bunks above me. There were 5 other people in my room. I really wanted to do the night watch so I could get some fresh air! We all worked as a team and helped out with dishes and drying after dinner, so good team work. The food was so nice. Roast beef, pasta, pizza and salad. One breakfast we



had pancakes with maple syrup and berries. I felt fine and happy with not one bit of sea sickness. The weather was good, sunny and one morning it was cloudy.

We did a lot of feedback at the end of the day and everyone gave me feedback. My shipmates said I was friendly and really funny and made people laugh a lot, especially Cody.

I learnt about being a good team member and being responsible with the ship and looking out for the people around me. Also I learnt to be brave. We had a brain storm about challenges, and I learnt to have faith in myself and to have a go at challenges. Mine was don't be afraid of heights and I did it. I climbed the mast. It made me feel so good about myself.

I would recommend the Ultimate Challenge on the Leeuwin to others because it is all about having a go at something new and challenging yourself. Being on the ship was hard work but it was fun. It also goes toward the adventurous journey part for my Silver Duke of Edinburgh award. I would love to do it again.

*Photos courtesy of Leeuwin Ocean Adventure.*

