

Phi Alpha Theta Road Trip

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Phi Alpha Theta students in a hangar at Wendover Airport.

Phi Alpha Theta, an American honor society for students and teachers of history, offers unique and educational experiences for students. On September 25th, the History Department's Delta Xi chapter went to Wendover Army Air Field, located just south of Wendover, Utah, for their annual road trip. This opportunity gave students a firsthand look at a local site that influenced World War II history.

Wendover Army Air Field served as a testing and training site for bombs throughout World War II, and it is best known for its connection to the atomic bomb. The 509th Composite Group, the crew that eventually dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, trained at Wendover. The site also provides insight into the legacy of the US Air Force and the sacrifices made by citizens and soldiers.

When studying major worldwide events, such as World War II, it can sometimes be difficult for students to connect the past to their own lives; visiting local historical sites helps bridge that gap. Blaine Villaplana, who attended the road trip, reflected on the airfield's significance: "It's pretty incredible that a relatively obscure location in Utah played such an important role in shaping world history." The visit demonstrated the importance of local history and the part it plays in regard to broader historical events.

Our Phi Alpha Theta club provides students with valuable opportunities to engage with history beyond the classroom. Jack Bell, another student who attended the trip, reflected on his experience: "My favorite part of the tour was when we went to Enola Gay's hanger. Looking at a replica bomb

provided an understanding to the weight of the decision that hung over leaders' heads during WWII." Hands-on experiences, such as this road trip, help shape students' understanding of difficult decisions, important events, and their lasting impacts.

While reading and analyzing sources help shape students' insight of historical events, visiting historical sites allows students to fully engage with the history. "As a history student, it's one thing to read about these events, but actually visiting the site where these crews trained really puts things into perspective," Villaplana said.

Through trips like these, Phi Alpha Theta offers students unique opportunities to engage with history more tangibly. They help students gain an appreciation for the connection of local and national history.

For students interested in joining our Phi Alpha Theta club or the mailing list, please reach out to the club faculty advisor, Mustafa Banister, at mustafa.banister@usu.edu.