

Disneyland dreaming

A netball trip to Disneyland® Paris that is more than just a ride

In early April, excited young netballers from all over England headed to Disneyland® Paris for England Netball's Junior Netball Festival. We spoke to Lauren Watson, coach at Northwich Sapphires NC, about the experience and how it was about more than just netball for her and her players.

What prompted you to go?

We just wanted to give the girls a new opportunity. I've known about it for a while but never taken the plunge, but I love that it's a combination of competitive netball, masterclasses and a trip to Disneyland® Paris. We took 45 players and ten coaches, so it was one Under 12 and two each Under 14 and Under 18. We haven't done tournaments for ages so to have that was amazing, but it was all the fun stuff off the court that added to the festival experience. Disneyland is obviously incredible but there were also masterclasses that were hugely engaging and great fun. Plus, there was always a chance to learn something new and win challenges individually. It was so well thought through and the girls hung on every word from the staff. They also got a talk from Thunder's Elia McCormick, and they really clung onto everything she said. We are massive Manchester Thunder fans so being able to have access to her was another unforgettable moment.

What about the tournament itself?

It was a real mixture of teams but cleverly designed in that there was a cup competition and a plate competition. So even if you don't perform particularly well in the rounds then you still got a lot of games against teams of a similar standard. That makes it a much more positive experience. It was so well thought out. We came home with silverware from all of our teams so that just topped everything off nicely.

Did you see a huge growth in your players?

Yes, especially because they were often playing alongside others that are not usually in their set teams. It was just the people who had signed up. It gave them a chance to build new relationships at the same time as growing as netballers. Another part of it was the personal development within the girls. Some of them had never been away from home for that long and they overcame that with such strength. It was amazing to see.




How about being in Disneyland® Paris?

Netball and Disneyland® Paris – what's not to like? It was incredible to be in that environment. There were some days we did the park in the morning and games in the afternoon and then others where it was swapped around. It sounds strange but the Disneyland® Paris aspect had just as much of an impact on some of the players. Some girls feared the rides but pushed themselves out of their comfort zone and took on the bigger rides. They gained that extra sense of personal achievement and pride at overcoming their fears. It added yet another aspect to their successes of the week and could be seen in their confidence on the court and within the group. Disneyland® Paris has a certain magic and that came through in the girls and coaches throughout the trip.

Can you sum up the festival in one sentence?

A perfect combination of two magical things, creating magical moments.

As if we need to ask, but will you be going again?

We are already looking at planning next year and have even more names down to go so it's a resounding yes. 

Our next available festival at Disneyland® Paris takes place Easter 2023.

If you're interested in taking your netballers for a magical experience you can find out more at www.sportexperiences.co.uk or email team@sportexperiences.co.uk or call 020 8335 4949

