

My experience of Japan, Summer 2008

My knowledge of Japan, prior to my participation on the programme, was fairly simplistic: I admired their advanced technology, their valuable traditions, their extremely efficient transport system and had a little knowledge of Japanese food.

This programme has certainly lived up to its title; giving me a unique opportunity to experience Japan, not as a tourist but as a student in a Japanese school and as a member of a Japanese host family, experiencing ordinary family life in Japan.

When arriving in Japan, my first impressions were of a very clean, polite and colourful nation. However, I was still worried about my severe lack of ability when it came to the language. This did not last for long though, as I soon came to realise that everyone was so friendly, understanding and eager to help.

The journey to the host family from Tokyo was an experience in itself, having the responsibility to make sure that you get from one place to another is certainly something that gives you a lot of self confidence. I stayed in Kyushu, where the weather was very hot and humid. The city was not quite what I expected; it was a bit more quiet and laid-back, although I could only compare it to Tokyo so that was understandable.

Meeting my host family and starting my first day at school in Japan have to rank among the most nerve-wracking events of my life, however I cannot stress enough how unfounded these nerves were; everyone was so interested to talk to me, ask me what the UK was like and what I thought so far about Japan, that I soon forgot about the nerves and relaxed into school and family life.



My host family were incredible; we went on day-trips to various sites within the prefecture and also further afield; the trip to Nagasaki to visit the site of the atomic bomb explosion via bullet train is something that will stay with me forever. They did everything that they could to make sure that I got the most out of my time in Saga and saying goodbye was very difficult.

However school life was, for me, the most enjoyable part of the whole experience; from the time spent eating lunch with my classmates to playing football for my class in the school's sports day,



it all contributed to make my time in school far more enjoyable than I had predicted. And it was not only the students who were interested and asked questions, the teachers were also keen to learn about my traditions and customs.

This scholarship programme has been a fantastic opportunity for me to experience life in Japan in a way which very few others will be able to. It has enabled me to widen my understanding of the country, the people and the culture.

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