

My experience on the 5 week trip to Japan

I can quite honestly say that the five weeks I spent in Japan were the best of my life. I experienced so much in a short amount of time: from visiting the mountains of Kyushu to making tempura with my host mother and sister. Although I was naturally very nervous about the prospect of spending so long in a foreign country, especially with my beginner's level Japanese, I soon realised I had absolutely no reason to be. My host family immediately made me feel completely at home and I felt part of the family. I got on especially well with my host sister and we are still in regular contact. School life was so unlike anything I had expected. I had a very stereotypical view that Japan was the home of technology and so was expecting all work to be done on computers. I soon found that this was very wrong, as Japanese schools use the very traditional teaching methods of a blackboard, chalk and textbooks. I was also surprised at how hard everyone works but found this work ethic infectious and I hope I have taken some of this back with me!

It is a common misconception that the Japanese are extremely formal and I immediately found that this was not true re so eager to help and you need only look a little lost for someone to come over and offer their help.

Japan has such an interesting culture that is so different to that of England. I was forever finding more little differences, each one fascinating. It took me a while to get used to "indoor shoes", peeling your grapes, the incredible heat and using chop sticks, but I adapted and grew to love the country, sushi and all!

All in all, I found this program an incredible experience that has completely changed me as a person. Since returning, I have felt more confident and feel I have matured. I hope that this was only the first of many trips to this fascinating country.

Catherine Russell



