

My Experience from My Trip to Japan

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From December 2 to 16, 2014
Stayed in Aira-city, Kagoshima

In December of 2014, I got to accomplish my dream; I got the opportunity to go to Japan. I got to do something that I never thought I would ever be able to do, and after it all, I have to say that it was probably the best experience of my life. And I will never forget the people I have met, or the experiences that I have made while I was there.



I lived in the town of Aira, which resided in the Kagoshima prefecture in Japan. I lived with the Yamashita family, and I had host parents as well as three host siblings. My parents are nurses, and they accepted me into their home with open arms. My sister Sumire, who is sixteen years old, is in an English Conversation Club at her school and is very good at speaking English. My brother Taiga, who is fourteen years old, is in Track and Field at his middle school, and he is very good. And my youngest brother Eisho, who is ten years old, is very energetic and cute.

I live in Auburn, California and I've lived alone with my mother for most of my life, and living with the Yamashita family for two weeks made me so happy to have gotten to stay with such a big family. I have three older brothers, but our age gaps are so large, that when I was growing up, they were already grown up, so I loved having siblings who were closer to my age.



Where I stayed in Aira was in Kajiki. The town was very scenic, with a side of Japan that I had not seen very much of prior to my trip. The climate seemed to be similar to Auburn during that time of the year, except maybe a bit colder.



When Sumire and I would walk home after school, the area that we walked was very peaceful, with barely any cars on the streets. But there were also large spiders that were commonly seen in webs above where we walked. I'm not very nervous around spiders, unless they are big, and even though Sumire said that they were harmless, I still got scared when I would notice one above me. Apparently the spiders were used for spider fights, known as Kumo-Gassen.

Kajiki High School was a very nice school that was also quite big. I enjoyed my time there a lot, and I was able to see differences between KHS and my high school, Placer High School. One thing was that they don't have janitors, so after lunch it's cleaning time for the whole school. I helped girls from our class clean the girls' bathroom that was on our level of the school. And cleaning time was done every day of school. Also, during lunch time, the students ate either in the cafeteria or in their classroom. At Placer my friends and I would eat outside of the cafeteria by the gymnasium, and students had the choice of leaving the school for lunch if they wanted to, and students could eat where they wanted to around the school. Classes were also quite different, not necessarily the subjects, but the students stayed in their classrooms in-between classes, and the teachers would walk to different classrooms for different classes, so that was pretty different to me, and it was nice that you had the same classmates for the full year for every class, while many high schools in America have the students get new classes halfway through the year, and for every daily class there would be different students. It was lucky if you got 2 or more classes with a friend for a semester. The teachers were very nice to me at Kajiki High School, especially the English teacher of Sumire's class, who helped me a lot. Sumire's classmates, friends, and other students were very eager to talk to me, and they were very nice. I had not met a single rude student at either of the schools I went to in Kajiki. I found that there was a nice mix with the students, where during the classes, they gave the teachers their attention and respect and were quiet unless asked otherwise. And during breaks in-between classes, lunch time, and after school they were lively and comparable to many American teenagers. At my high school, it usually felt like there were students who were either respectful or lively, so I was pleasantly surprised by the students at Kajiki High School and Kajiki Junior High School.





The students attending Kajiki Junior High School reminded me a lot of my classmates from my middle school, and I had many good memories brought back just for being at Taiga's middle school for two days. The students were very cute, and even though their English wasn't as good as the High School's, they were still so eager to talk with me. After school, I got to see how many students partook in sports, the majority of students in Kajiki were on sports teams and would practice after school, Taiga practiced with his Track and Field team everyday, even with a hurt knee, he would still go and do as much as he could out of his own freewill. He was very dedicated.



In Japan, I got to do so many things I had never gotten to do before; I got to ride on a train, I got to ride on a ferry, I got to see the active volcano Sakurajima, I got to sing karaoke with Sumire and our friends where they threw a Welcome Party for me, I got to go to a Japanese movie theater and watch a movie with my family, I got to see Kumamoto castle and go to the top with my family, I got to take Purikura photo booth pictures with friends and family, and I got to eat foods that are either not imported to America or are made differently. I'm unbelievably happy that I got to do everything that I did in Japan.





The two weeks that I spent in Japan were the happiest two weeks of my life, and I feel like I will never be able to thank everyone I encountered there enough for giving me the experiences that I got. I wish I could have stayed longer, but I'm grateful that I at least got to stay for two weeks. I am not sure if I will ever be able to go back, but I'm going to make it my personal goal to earn enough money to go back as soon as possible for a visit. I got to live my dream this year, so now my new dream is to go back and visit, and to learn more Japanese so that I can express all of the gratitude I have for this experience.

To any American students who are like me, and don't think you would ever be able to go to Japan because you know you wouldn't be able to afford it, but it is your dream to go to Japan, I wish you luck with getting an opportunity like mine, and I hope you can achieve it soon.

