

# **My Experiences from My Trip to Japan**

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My time in Japan was a valuable experience for me. It had been my dream since I was a small child to visit Japan. I loved the culture and snagged the opportunity to learn Japanese at a local community college when I got it. I studied for about a year and could speak, read and write two of the three alphabets. Because both of my parents could speak Japanese we would converse through Japanese occasionally. I thought I would do fine but realized how wrong I was. It is amazing how fast the Japanese speak to each other, and I was grateful to all of the people who spoke slowly.

Every family member was kind and encouraging. If I didn't understand, dictionaries would be pulled out or they would attempt to speak English. Fortunately, my host sister, なおさん, could speak English and I was often able to ask her for help. Because she came to Oregon with a group of exchange students, we shared a special bond. I had been a host sister to one of her friends, かりんさん, and came to the group classes when I had the chance. Knowing なお helped me connect with her family and I started to find myself taking every chance I could to spend time with them. After walking home from school, I would watch TV with my younger brother じよのすけさん and whoever else was in the room. Family members would do their own thing until dinner-time. It was a rule in the house that everyone ate together when they could, and even the grandparents would join in occasionally.





I started my trip out with a small understanding of the language and culture but with everyone's help I learned more and more. Their culture is different and unique from the American culture and the family, teachers, students and friends all taught me new words or customs. In exchange, I taught them everything I could. Together the family and I made pancakes, and the grandma taught me how to make かきあげ – which I loved. At school, the two homeroom teachers came up with a homework assignment that allowed us to share pieces of our cultures. My classmates, けんとさん, りこさん and なおさん made posters of things in Japan and things in いづみ. I made a poster of things in America as well as things in my city, Silverton. Even though it was difficult I tried to explain in Japanese so they could understand.



Spending time with the family and friends gave me a wonderful experience. I went to watch なおさん's dance practice and watched both なおさん and まなさん play tennis. At night, I would stay up late to relax “ごろん” with the family and spend time with the mother, father and grandparents. I loved the welcome party they had for me— lots of food and laughs were shared. Explaining my life to them was entertaining; I'm not the best at speaking Japanese, but I tried and they recognized that.



Everyone was so giving - they gave me gifts when I was expecting none and they let me borrow an extra school uniform they had. It had a few missing pieces such as a ribbon and shoes but they bought them for me. Something that warmed my heart was when the dad hand-made a name plate for the uniform when I was excited about having the ability to even wear a uniform. Without fail, the mom and grandmother made sure I had everything I needed and every family member reminded me of my own family. They showed me love in their own unique way. The teachers taught me as one of their own students and the students accepted me as a friend. Because everyone welcomed me into their lives I had a wonderful experience.

I'm glad to have met them and I can say with certainty that I won't forget the experiences we shared.

