



My trip to Japan this past summer was the most unforgettable, wonderful thing that could have happened to me. I made countless new friends, who I hope that I will be friends with for life, and the entire experience broadened my horizons to no end. Japan, you were my dream before I even set foot on the ground there – now that my dream came true, I have realized just how much I wanted it.

All of the people I met were the most important part of this trip for me. Culture lives and changes with the people, and Japan has such a famous, unique culture that can't be found anywhere else. My homestay sister, Kaoru, was my window into Japanese culture – and I was hers to American. It is weird, too, thinking that the entire impression of your country rests on your shoulders. Not only was she a window, though. I was extremely glad to find that she became my friend. We watched movies together, ate meals, talked – it was more than I could have hoped for, and I am sad to admit that it was only for two days.

Another aspect of Japan and its culture that I loved was the food. Everywhere there was tons and tons of delicious food. The most memorable, of course, were the meals my homestay Mama cooked for me, like okonomiyaki. Surprisingly, another thing that I really liked were some hotdogs my friends and I shared one afternoon. It just shows that the pride a country puts into their food even shows in food that isn't native to them. Who knew that hotdogs in Japan are delicious, anyways? Japan is so well associated with sushi, sashimi, and things like stir fry or sukiyaki, but you can't actually know how all of the food is so amazing unless you have the chance to try it firsthand.

I guess I should close this out just by mentioning how much I miss Japan. Its people, all of the stunning sights, its thriving culture, all of these things, and more, I will miss. However, I do not plan to miss these things forever. Finishing this writing brings back the stinging nostalgia that I had as the plane was taking off from Japan, to take me home. How is it even possible to have such bittersweet emotions for a place I hardly knew for ten days? I can't hope to properly answer that. All I know is that I will hold on to hope for as long as it takes.