



Japan

After taking the class for 3 years, the idea of going still seemed radical to me. Although it would have been nice to go, cost and the inconvenience were always obstacles. After hearing about the JETMIP, I was skeptic. Could I actually get in? After the application was done and sent in, the waiting game began. When I had thoroughly forgotten about it, Morikawa sensei went up to the class one day and read the email of acceptance. I was stunned. I couldn't believe that I was actually one of the few to be picked to participate in the trip. I had no idea what was in store for me.

Although an 11 hour flight sounded long, napping on the plane and talking to fellow students made the time fly by. When we finally arrived, I didn't know what to expect. The first thing that stuck out to me was the number of vending machines. America has vending machines, but not nearly as much as in Japan. Getting on the bus and driving in the streets for the first time was great because we got the chance to experience Japan first hand. There seemed to be a vending machine on every street corner, which was amazing. It fit perfectly, since it was rather humid and hot. In my mind, I planned on trying out every single drink by the time the trip ended. The driving also made me nervous because everything was on the opposite side of the road, since Japan drives on the left side of the road.

Upon arriving at the institute, Japan didn't seem as amazing as I anticipated. However, the fun started once I tried to go to my room. In front of the elevator were security gates which needed an id card to pass through. I thought it was really cool and innovative because it provided and ensured security to the guests. I was one of the first boys to get onto our floor. However, once I got to my door, I tried to use the room key, to no avail. I couldn't figure out which side and which direction the key went into. After struggling and getting it open, I tried to turn on the lights, with no luck. I thought my room came with no power. After turning the T.V. on, I assumed there was something I was missing. I backtracked, and found a plastic holder mounted to the door. When the card was pushed in, the light flickered on. I was amazed. Something so simple and innovative was such a normal thing in Japan. This device ensured that you would never forget to lock your door without the key. This experience alone made me much more excited to see what the rest of Japan had to offer.

Japan definitely lives up to its many reputations. For one, technology and innovative designs are abundant throughout the country. It seems everything is smarter and much more efficient. For example, cell phones can be used as wallets, televisions, music players, cameras, and of course, phones. Something as innovative as a high tech toilet was nothing short of what I expected. I was scared to try it, but I don't regret using it at all. Given enough time, I'm sure I would have gotten used to the feeling. Not knowing what to expect, the country went beyond my standards.

One of the best features of Japan is the rich, dense culture everywhere. Hundreds of years are perfectly preserved in buildings, locations, customs and traditions. It is apparent and clear to see how tradition is highly valued in the Japanese culture. The sense of national pride is clear and something to be jealous over. The Japanese love for their country is something I hope to bring back home with me. I also love how seamlessly and effortlessly the culture adapts with innovative Japan. The deer in Nara are used to people, and castles and supermarkets share the same block. Although Japan never ceases to advance and become a greater force in the world, it will always remember its roots, which is a trait I greatly admire.

The experiences and people I met from Japan will be a memory I will never forget. The timeless atmosphere of beauty, grace, and wonder will always be something I look back on. The program has made me even more interested in the Japanese country and culture. I am also inspired to become a Japanese Exchange Teacher, and I hope to one day return to the great country for more than just a vacation.