



JAPAN FOUNDATION

A Life-Changing Experience

Before this adventure occurred, I was a shy, quiet, and isolated girl. However, this amazing experience changed me entirely. I came out of my shell and evolved into someone with initiative, confidence, and thirty-one awesome friends. Japan welcomed all of us with open arms and it felt so right to be there. I embraced Japan and its wonderful culture with my mind, body, and heart. I can't put into words how truly happy I felt. I felt like I was given new life, like I was renewed inside and out.

I used to think that every single thing about Japan was truly and entirely amazing, but after actually experiencing Japan first-hand, I see that I was wrong. Japan is more than amazing. There isn't a word to describe how fantastic Japan truly is. The people were even better. I always knew how respectful the people are, but to physically be immersed in the population was mind-blowing. Whenever I would pay for an item, I would have an "arigatou-war" with the cashier. The cashiers and I would end up saying arigatou about five times each during the transaction. It was quite comical but at the same time it made me happy at the respect that I was given. Shopping in Japan gave me the most opportunities to practice my Japanese skills. Of course I messed up a few times, but they would always smile and encourage me to continue. I even received a compliment from a cashier in the Rinku-Town Outlet Mall for my Japanese skills. That one compliment boosted my confidence and gave me courage to continue speaking in Japanese whenever I could.

If there is one thing that I regret, it's that I wasn't able to remain in Japan. However, I don't have a single bad thing to say about this program and the memories it left me with. I got to feel every aspect of Japan and it left me breathless. I was kind of worried about whether or not I would get along with everyone participating, but that feeling quickly diminished when I met everyone. Thanks to this program, I've made new lasting friends and I'm truly glad I was able to meet everyone. It was more fun to experience Japan with everyone rather than experiencing it alone. The Homestay was my most treasured experience. Even though I wish it was longer than two days, I'm grateful I was given an opportunity to experience it, no matter how short it was. My family was more than I imagined. They were so welcoming and kind and I felt like I was a true member of their family. I had so many things in common with my eldest host-sister, Moemi. I really miss them and I truly hope I can see them again one day.

After returning home from Japan, my eyes have opened and I now know what I want to do with the rest of my life. I felt so right to be in Japan, and I know that Japan is where I want to live for the rest of my life. When I returned, I immediately got in touch with Temple University, Japan Campus. It is a four year college located in Tokyo and it is an English-speaking college for students like me who wish to be a part of Japan. This experience has given me the initiative so that I can put my all into getting into this college. After college, I plan to try and become a part of the JET Program as an English teacher. I hope one day, I can return to the beloved Japan and its wonderful people.