



2011 JET-MIP ESSAY

MARCH, 2012: BREEZE ISSUE #53

A FREE MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF JAPAN & TEACHERS OF JAPANESE

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Going to Japan has always been the number one goal I had stashed away in the back of my mind. Due to the fact I was in high school, I came to accept the fact that traveling to Japan would just have to be one of those things I'd have to wait for, whether it be in college or further down the road when searching for job opportunities. When my Japanese teacher came by and dropped the application packet in front of me, I almost threw it out; I have tried all kinds of contests where the award was a trip to Japan, but I never had any luck.

When I received a phone call from my Japanese teacher saying that I was part of the program, I was ecstatic. My dream of going to Japan was finally coming true. However, as the day got closer and closer, I began to get really nervous, and it hadn't fully dawned on me until I was walking away from my father and heading off to security to head to San Francisco that I was seriously going to travel across the country—and the world—by myself, or so I thought. I remember finally getting into the airport in San Francisco and the first girl I spoke to was Aingeal Miller; we spoke of our anxieties, how we've always wanted to go to Japan, why we liked Japan, and so on. This dramatically decreased my feeling of anxiety and I knew right then and there that I made a new friend. . . In less than five minutes of being at the airport! Meeting up with the other students eased my mind even more as I learned that everyone was friendly and I loved the fact that we all had so much in common because we all loved Japan so much; there was never a dull moment where we were just sitting in silence as everyone was always talking to each other.

When I got to Japan, I quickly realized that my Japanese wasn't as good as I first believed it to be, but that was okay because all the other students were so willing to help. My first real feel for Japan was when I was in the homestay because I was finally in a foreign country by myself, no other program members around. My family was great to me and they made it possible for me to better understand the culture, and I was really flattered with how the father showed so much interest in the US. I found it awesome when my host family was best friends with Brettley Ross' family, so we got to hang out together and go to the aquarium. My family did so much for me and I still keep in contact with Megumi.

This trip was no doubt a challenge at my skills, but it helped me greatly and I am so glad I went because I made so many friends on the way. It reminded me that I should keep trying for a career with Japan because the chance to travel just brings out the best in people; you become more educated about ;

surroundings and you begin to pay attention to the little details that you thought never mattered. I would highly recommend this trip to any friendly person looking to go to Japan because they want a career in it. I wish everyone else the best and I hope they are all able to continue with Japanese in their lives.

Breeze #62



Breeze #61



Breeze #60



Breeze #59



Breeze #58



Breeze #57

Breeze #56



Breeze #55



Breeze #54



Breeze #53



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2011 J-LEAP Report: Eri Sonohara

2011 JET-MIP Essay: Eli Jones

2011 JET-MIP Essay: Theresa Tran

2011 JET-MIP Essay: Eurico Senna

2011 JET-MIP Essay: Debbie Daniels

Breeze #52



Breeze #51

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Annual Report

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