



2011 JET-MIP ESSAY

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

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On July 16, 2011, I set out on my first adventure to Japan. I was one of thirty-two kids chosen from around the United States to participate in the JET Memorial Invitational Program. The program is in honor of two American JET English teachers, Montgomery Dickson and Taylor Anderson, who tragically died in the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami that devastated northern Japan. So we all traveled to Japan in order to carry on their legacy of creating a bridge between two countries.

This trip was a wonderful first-hand, educational experience for me to improve and enrich my Japanese language skills, as well as a beautiful trip. I made many new friends and learned a lot about Japanese culture. I also got to experience my 18th birthday during this trip in Japan, which made the trip even more exciting.

Before we flew to Japan, we all met in San Francisco, where we went to Japan Town. Japan Town was a fun experience because we saw how the Japanese culture continues in a big community outside of Japan. In Japan Town, we had a scavenger hunt, requiring us to ask Japan Town residents questions in Japanese. From that little experience, it made me all the more excited for Japan.

When we finally arrived in Osaka, Japan, it was amazing. Just seeing how everyday life functioned was interesting in itself. Then we made our first trip to the Japanese high school, Senboku. We met our host brothers or sisters, and then went with them to Osaka Castle and afterwards to the crowded inner city. I was so entranced the whole time by the amazing nature and physical structures and technology and lifestyle, that I felt like I was in a dream; the best dream of my life, and it had finally come true.

The next day we visited Kyoto to go see Kiyomizu temple and Kinkaku temple. This was definitely the highlight of my trip. I was in awe. We visited the very temples that I would see all over the internet with the beautiful architecture and nature that I only wished of going to, and I was actually there. I remember arriving at the entrance to Kiyomizu, and I saw a few temples just towering over me with the gorgeous green mountain forest in the background. I stopped and just looked at it for a while, just thinking "This is so amazing." Kiyomizu and Kinkaku temples are really amazing, tranquil settings that give a feel that they had a very important role in Japan's past and that I was very, very fortunate to be in their presence.

One of my other highlights was my birthday. On July 24, I was with my host family. They treated me go to Umeda to go to the Pokemon Center, and to go to the SEGA game center, as well as see the [Privacy - Terms](#)

new Osaka train station. While in Umeda, my host mother also won a prize for me in the UFO game machines, as well as trying to win a few others with quite a few attempts. After Umeda, my host family took me to a capoeira class. This was one of the things I had wanted to do most in Japan. Capoeira is an Afro-Brazilian martial art that has been spreading rapidly throughout the world, and I have heard from many people that the capoeiristas (that's what a person that practices it is called) in Japan are awesome. This proved to be true. I had a great experience during the class, which was an environment where I could communicate to Japan by not only means of American ways, but by Brazilian ways as well.

And I can't forget all of the friends I made in Japan that were in the program. Though it was only a 12 day trip, it felt like it was at least a month and by the end of the trip, it felt like we had all known each other for the past 3 years or something. We all grew so close and had such life-changing experiences together, that we will never forget each other and our first trips to a country we all love, Japan. We also want to have a reunion every now and then so we can keep in touch.

My experience in Japan has changed me as a person and I am strongly considering becoming a JET English teacher in Japan after I am finished with college. I am deeply appreciative of the opportunity that Montgomery Dickson and Taylor Anderson have provided me and the thirty-one other "JETMIPs" with and we will definitely use this experience to strengthen the bridge between Japan's and America's understandings of one another.

Breeze #62	▼
Breeze #61	▼
Breeze #60	▼
Breeze #59	▼
Breeze #58	▼
Breeze #57	
Breeze #56	▼
Breeze #55	▼
Breeze #54	▼
Breeze #53	▼

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Breeze #52



Breeze #51



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