

## SEPTEMBER, 2014: BREEZE ISSUE #83

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



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On July 8, 2014, I was able to make my biggest dream come true when I flew out of Los Angeles, California, for Japan. It was the best experience of my life thus far, and I'm literally counting how many days I have left until I can go back.

I've known for a while now that Japanese was going to be in my life somehow, but I didn't know to what extent. I

went into this trip thinking that if it went well, I was going to come back and apply for a college where I can major in Japanese, and then do something with that. I was completely on the mark. I had a wonderful time in Japan, and I think this program was what made it better than any school trip that I could go on.

We went to Osaka, Nara, Sendai, Ishinomaki, Tokyo, and Kyoto, and I loved every single place. Even though we didn't make it to Rikuzentakata, I still had a blast. I loved our place at the Kansai Institute in Osaka. It was a great place for all of us to hang out, and it was usually pretty easy to find someone to go exploring with. Along with the karaoke room, the library, the study room, and the lounges, it was a great place to hang out with everyone from the trip. It's easily one of my favorite places in Japan, just because of all the memories that I shared with everyone else.

It was also nice how much free time that we were allotted, because on other trips that I've been on, students are usually restricted to staying with teachers all the time, and not being allowed to be off on their own, but it was completely different this time around. We were allowed to go exploring pretty much every place we went to.

Now, I can't even begin to talk about everyone else on my trip. I had no idea how well I'd be able to interact with the other kids, but I made 31 new friends in the smallest time period ever. I couldn't believe how easy it was to find at least something in common with everyone. Even though I'd just met everyone, we all were able to connect over this country in some way or another, be it through culture, through the language, or through manga/anime.

I've been wanting to go to Japan since I was in the 5th grade and I'd read my first manga. My love for this country has developed throughout the years into something that I literally didn't expect. When I was a kid, I thought that I was supposed to become a doctor and that that would be the only way for me to be successful in life. Meanwhile, I had this thing on the side that made me most happy. I love talking to people about it, I love learning things in Japanese class, I love trying to reach people (including my mother, who I currently call "kaa-san"), I really love it all.

While on the trip I never especially got "homesick." Instead, when I got there, it felt like coming home. I have a few places in the US where I can feel completely at ease. I found that Japan really is one of those places. It actually took me by surprise. I was expecting that I'd get to Japan, and it would be a great experience, but then I'd realize that I was too far from home, and I'd be excited to go back to my home country. But the truth was, I'd never felt more at home in my life. The places I saw, the friends I grew to love, the people I met, the cultures I experienced, are all memories that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Nothing can take them from me. And as I go through this school year, and apply for colleges, I'll know with every fibre of my being, that I'm going the right path for me by applying to schools with a Japanese major. I might not know exactly how I want Japan in my life quite yet, but I do know that Japan will have a strong presence as long as I have anything to say about it.

Taylor Anderson and Montgomery Dickson. You two have something in common. You both love this amazing country and all its inhabitants. This is an unconditional love that cannot be changed. The time you spent there, the lives you changed, will never ever be forgotten. Unfortunately, while following your dreams, you both lost your lives. Throughout my trip I was able to see your legacy, what and who you left behind. This isn't a bad thing. You changed so many people for the better. I just hope that one day, I can change people's lives like you once did. I feel your souls watching over all 32 of us, along with the previous members, and the members to come, silently wishing us luck from the shadows.

## NIPPON THROUGH MY EYES PHOTO SUBMISSION



“Suzuna and Todayji”

This is a picture of my host sister, Todayji temple, and I. I love this photo because Nara was a wonderful place to explore, and I loved this temple, like a lot of puerile do, because of the deer.

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