

REPORT from Jordyn BRADY of Lincoln High School

Having recently returned from Japan and having experienced the huge cultural differences,

The cultural differences I experienced were huge. When we as New Zealanders talk about culture and history, we talk about a mere 200 years. Where as in Japan, their culture and history go back centuries. And it still affects every aspect of their lives.

From something small like having outdoor shoes, and two pairs of indoor shoes, one just for the bathroom, to practicing Zen which is meditation, and is used in most of the shrines.

Where NZ homes are quite spacious, Japans population dictates that their homes are on smaller sections and mostly two storied. Inside their homes is a mixture of traditional and modern styles. For example, my room was quite simple with a Titami mat, which is made from thin bamboo and wearing shoes on it is frowned upon. There was no door handles, as the doors were sliding and made from light wood and rice paper. My bed was a futon, which I had to pack away every morning and set up every night. The kitchen was a blend of old and new. From the use of chopsticks for cooking, to the modern electronics.

Religion affects most aspects of their daily lives. Every home has a room dedicated to Zen and their ancestors. This room is very sacred and as a guest I had to be invited into this room. The Japanese food is extremely different from the type of Japanese food available in NZ. My host family took me to a sushi bar, where I tried raw octopus, salmon eggs and varieties of seafood I could not name. Hmm some things I doubt I will ever try again!

Also something I found quite different was that we had school lunches provided, I didn't find them that nice, but you had pretty much had no choice. The school I went to was very different to what I was used to. The relationship between the teachers and students was odd. Teaches did not hesitate to hit the students if displeased. I found this really weird, as it would not be acceptable here. The building was four stories with a central courtyard and only one small square of grass. For PE the class got split up into boys and girls. The boys got to play sports like baseball and soccer, were as the girls had to do dance.

I really enjoyed my stay in Japan and wish to go back at one point, but I now no how exchange students coming to NZ feel. It was an experience I shall never forget.

Jordyn Brady

