

Kurashiki Student Exchange 2002 Report by Corinne Price.

Kurashiki where should I start? I suppose right at the beginning at the application and selection process. I applied because I love to travel and experience new cultures, countries and languages also to improve my Japanese. When I first found out that I was selected, I was really excited and couldn't believe I had been chosen. I told my younger brother who was the only one home at the time and the first thing he said to me was can you get me some Dragon Ball Z stuff.

After that day I was pretty calm and collected but it still hadn't really sunk in. My time spent leading up to the trip was spent going to a number of meetings to get everyone ready for the trip and writing to pub charities, working men clubs and rotaries to apply for funding. Sam Berry and I managed to get enough money from two pub charities, the Temps Bar and O'Sheas to cover all the costs of the trip for us and Nicole Wright.

On the 24th of September at 4am I got up ready to leave for Japan. Surprisingly I was still pretty clam and collected and I was pretty much like that during the plane trip. It wasn't until we were really close to landing that I started to get very, very, very excited. It had finally hit me. I was in Japan!

On arrival I found Japan big, hot and good for shopping! I soon realised that you could buy just about anything in vending machines like drinks, cigarettes, film for cameras, and popcorn. The accommodation for the first night wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. We got our own rooms and bathrooms so it was all good.

I had a lovely host family in Kurashiki. My host Father and Mother were quite good at speaking English so with their English and my Japanese we did pretty good at communicating. I was very glad to find that my host family's toilet was normal and that I didn't have to use a Japanese style toilet all the time. I also had a very cute host little sister who spoke to me in Japanese all the time, of course I couldn't understand a word she said as she was only three. I do wish I had more time in Japan so I could get to know my host family better.

School in Japan, for me, was fabulous. I loved it. I went to Tamashima Kita Junior High School. Most of the kids and teachers English was limited but everyone was super nice to me and I got a lot of people telling me who they love, that they thought Cameron was handsome and that they like cake. I had heaps of fun at school and made a lot of friends. My favourite class was English because I could actually understand it. School was very different in Japan to what it is like in New Zealand. In Japan no one brought their own food to school they were served the same meal as everyone else in their cafeteria or classroom. When we arrived at school we would have to take our shoes off and put on some slippers. This was ok at the start but by the end I started to get sick of always having to change my shoes. At the end of each day we would have to clean the classroom. This wasn't as bad as it sounded. One thing I found strange at school was that the girls and guys didn't interact with each other at all. The best part of school was clubs. My school had a variety of clubs some academic and some sporting. Sam and I had a lot

of fun after school with the running club. On most days we would stay at school participating in clubs till 6pm.

I did a lot of things in Japan. One of the things I enjoyed was going to Washuzan Highland Amusement Park, shopping at Aeon Plaza, Karaoke and Purikura. Purikura, short for print club, is little photos you get taken, you can then add things to the photo like words and stamps. I had so much fun getting Purikura with my Japanese friends I wish we had Purikura as good as that in New Zealand. Karaoke was awesome. On our last Sunday in Japan Sam and I tried our hand at karaoke with our host students Manami and Nana. We went into a small room and at first Sam and I were a little shy but once we had sung one song we really started to get into it and had so much fun. And in case you were wondering we sung English songs not Japanese.

At the end of my trip I found it hard to leave my host family. As we were dropping my host student Nana off at school and I was saying goodbye to her I had tears in my eyes and I was nearly crying. Japan was so great. I wouldn't exchange this experience for anything in the world. I hope that one day I will be able to go back to Kurashiki and visit my host family and all my friends from school.
