

Kurashiki Student Exchange 2002 Report

By Jikita de Schot

I filled out an application sheet and wrote an essay over the holidays for a chance to go to Japan. I got a letter a few weeks later saying I had made it to the next step which was an interview. I went to the interview and met the leaders of the trip. I was asked questions by them based on my essay. After Richard said, "you've done really well to get this far," couple of times, I wasn't too confident after leaving the interview. When I received a letter, surprisingly it was a congratulations letter, I was very excited- I was going to Japan.

We had our first meeting some weeks later at the C.C.C building in town. Here we met everyone who was going and introduced ourselves. We had all our meetings here for the rest of the time. We talked about lots of things at the meetings and various people came to them where they helped us getting prepare. We thank Newton Dodge for his input; the information given was very helpful. I think the meetings could have been a little more organized with some of the things we did e.g. planning to go to a Japanese restaurant for tea. This could have been improved by delegating some of the responsibility to the parents as Richard and Pip had other responsibilities as well but nevertheless we coped and Richard and Pip- you guys did an awesome job.

For fundraising my family and I sold Cadbury chocolates. These were done in a lot of places but I'd like to thank O.L.V primary school for their support in allowing me to sell them at their school (my old primary school.) Our uniforms were bought at reduced prices at Canterbury Clothing. These uniforms were organized in a short time by Pip. The money for these uniforms was all paid for by pub charities. A big thank you to Canterbury Clothing and pub charities.

At the airport we had some group photos and said our goodbyes to family and friends. I left the airport pretty excited about the next two weeks in Japan. The plane trip was very long but it was good because we were all sitting together. I enjoyed watching movies on the way over. When we arrived it was hot and I was a little tired. We went through customs pretty fast and made our way to the train station. We arrived in Okayama and walked to our hostel. We had dinner and went to bed.

On the second day we made a courtesy call to Mayor Nakada, which was in the newspaper. There I met my host mother Naomi. Afterwards at home, I met the rest of my host family. They were really nice to me and we soon settled into a game of Nintendo 64. I was a little homesick the first days but after talking to my parents I thought I'd just make the most of it over there and so I was fine after the first couple of days. The next day was my first school day at Kotoura junior high school. Everyone there was also very nice and throughout the five days I was there I did lots of new things. I joined in a tea ceremony, did calligraphy and joined in class with the rest of the students. I was quite tired and lonely in the first couple of days sometimes because I had no one to talk to as I was at my own school however it got better and I was fine after that

I made lots of new friends there. The only bad thing was when the badminton pole dropped on my toe and I was taken to hospital. I spent a couple hours at hospital that day, but everyone was really nice there especially Pip for staying with me while there. I'd like to thank all the students and staff at Kotoura junior high school for making it such a good time I had there, particularly to my home room 1-3 and to the English teachers- Evans Sensei and John.

I did many things with the group and with my host family. One thing I really enjoyed doing with my host family was going to Universal Studios Japan. It was really fun there going on all the rides and going to particular shows with Miki, my host sister. They also took me shopping, to the huge Seto Bridge and to general places like the bookstore and supermarket, which were quite different from New Zealand. I'd like to thank my host family, Miki, Takuya, Hideshi and Naomi for having me at their house for two weeks and for being so welcoming.

Some of the things we did with the group were going to Hiroshima Peace park and museum which was quite an eye-opener, to Washulan amusement park which was really fun, shopping for a short time and to Sugo elementary school. I really enjoyed going to all these places especially seeing as we had gone and did all these things as a group.

The highlights of the trip for me would be the day we went to the Washulan Amusement park because of all the good rides and everything there and because we were there as a group. The other time was when we all went shopping at the Aeon Plaza because again we were all together and because this was one of my few opportunities for shopping. I would recommend to others to do the exchange because I had an awesome time and learnt lots about Japanese way of life and made new friends with people over there and other people going on the exchange.

Thank you to the Kurashiki and Christchurch City Councils for their organization, funding and support, to Bill Goudry and Keiko Onishi for all their help and organization, to my host family, the Onishis for looking after me for the two weeks and finally to Pip and Richard for making the trip such a success and for looking after us. Thank you.