

Kurashiki Student Exchange 2002 Report

By Kate Harris

The reason I applied for this trip was to learn about the Japanese culture and practice the language. After taking Japanese for just over 2 years I decided that a trip to Japan would be a perfect opportunity to improve my vocabulary and have an amazing experience. When I leave school I would like to go and live in Japan and be an Assistant English Teacher. Ultimately this trip showed me what it would be like living in Japan and also show me what the Japanese lifestyle is like. When I found out that I had been accepted to go, I was very excited and honoured about being chosen as one of the group to go away. It was an amazing feeling to realise that I was actually going away to Japan in the September school holidays. I believe that without the help of my Japanese teacher, I probably would not have been accepted. After all she is the one that said I should apply.

The Tuesday meetings at Christchurch City Council were a good opportunity to meet the others that I was going away with. At these sessions it was good to get our questions answered and get any advice given to us that would help in any way. The support of the leaders were great. They tried their best to answer all of our questions and inform us of any meetings, information etc. Together Pip and Richard brought this whole trip together and without their organisation skills and hard work, this trip would not have been as successful as it was.

It was excellent not only to have our parents supporting us, but also to have Pub Charities there right behind us. In the end they ended up paying for the total cost of our group uniform. With them paying that \$1700, we had more money individually to put towards our own needs. From Canterbury Clothing Company we got a group discount on our uniforms, consisting of two polo shirts and one pair of cargo pants each. A big thank you to CCC for their comfortable clothes and a big discount off the cost.

On the day that we were due to fly out of the airport, I was nervous but also very excited. Like everyone else I was worried about leaving my family, friends and boyfriend back in New Zealand. But I knew that I could cope because I have been away from my family for 4 weeks. One of the biggest things was I didn't know how easily I was going to adjust to a different lifestyle. After all moving into a house with a family you don't know in a foreign country is pretty hard. But I knew that once I got on the plane that there was no turning back and that the adventure had only just begun. The plane trip itself was very long and also very tiring. It was hard to keep yourself preoccupied as well as trying to make sure every body was all right so you wouldn't have to put up with their moaning. But on the plane ride there, we had a good chance to get to know each other better, because we were still strangers. The flight home was much better because it was night and it was easier to sleep. One thing that I think should be changed is that when we arrived in Kansai we had to catch 2 trains to get to our dorm in Okayama. Next time I think the group should sleep in Kansai that night then catch the 2 trains to Okayama the next morning. This would make people less tired the next day, as when we arrived everyone was tired and hungry and just wanted to get some rest.

My host family - Masao, Keiko, Yukari and Atsushi were really kind and friendly towards me. Anywhere I wanted to go they would take me and they also cooked up all my favourite Japanese food. They did their very best at speaking English, and in return I did my best to