

REPORT from Ryan SANDERS

of Boys High School

My host family's hospitality was exquisite and they made my stay very comfortable and were a lot of fun to be with.

My time at Japanese school was very educational as I realized many of our stereotypical views of Japan were wrong they were basically exactly the same as us except they were speaking another language of course. I was even able to participate in some lessons like math's and art, as they didn't require me to speak Japanese.

We visited many historical and cultural places such as Okayama castle where I saw many old Japanese artifacts and saw how architecture was in old Japan. There was also Entsuji temple where my cultural experience continued to broaden in activities such as Ocha (Japanese tea ceremony), Japanese dancing and using fans, Flower arranging, Japanese calligraphy and even played a traditional Japanese instrument.

We visited a very energetic bunch of elementary students at Tashima elementary and they tired us out with hours of sport in the blistering sun. We were all very relieved when we were called inside the classrooms for lunch. Afterwards we played a card game called Uno which is very popular over there as well as NZ.

On the Saturday we had a free day with our families. My family took me to the most amazing Japanese game centre called U Para. It was much better than any NZ game centre. It was 5 stories high and had everything you could want video games, bowling, air hockey, pool, basketball, soccer, baseball, tennis, ping pong, drums, guitar, a restaurant and the list goes on. We stayed there for about 4 hours it was so much fun.

Next on the agenda was the dreaded trip to the international cultural festival where we performed our national anthem and traditional Maori poi song. We were all very nervous, especially when we made some last minute changes to the boy's part. We were asked to speak Maori and then poke their tongues out.... I was the only one who did it... very embarrassing... moving on.

We visited the bomb museum in Hiroshima, which was very educational and very eye opening there were also many schools there on field trips and they all waved as they passed. We also visited two amusement parks the first was a local park in Kurashiki the last was on our final day at Universal studios Japan! It was so much fun and although I think everyone was sad that they were leaving we all still had a great time there.

In summary this trip was a big culture shock for me, and an excellent learning experience. I made some new friends and a new family I'll never forget my time in Japan and especially my Japanese family. Someday I hope to return to Japan and I will be sure to meet them again.
Ryan Sanders

