

Kurashiki Student Exchange 2002 Report By Samantha Berry

Wow! What can I say, Japan was the Best!

When I first heard of the Kurashiki Student Exchange, I thought that this would be an opportunity of a lifetime. As a chance to go to Japan was what I had always wanted. As soon as I was given the application form I took it home and fingers crossed that my parents would say "Yes". I then had to write a 150 word essay explaining why I wanted to go, why I should be chosen and how was I going to raise the \$2,650 to get there.

Two weeks later I got a letter in the mail saying that I had been selected for an interview. I was rapt to even get this far. When I had the interview, I was a little nervous. This was where I met the co-ordinators, Richard Paton and Pip Smith. They talked to me about the trip, homesickness and informed me that I would be home hosted. I left the interview proud that I had got this far. The following Saturday I got a letter in the mail telling me I had been selected for the Kurashiki Student Exchange 2002. I couldn't believe it. My parents were very proud of me.

From then on every second Tuesday we met as a team for an hour or so and talked. I thought this was a really good idea, it gave us a chance to get to know each other. At the meetings we talked about the itinerary and discussed any issues that we had. Pip and Richard were very helpful. I felt very safe going away with them. One of the things that we discussed was the uniform. We all decided on beige three-quarter shorts and a black polo shirt. They looked great. So thank you to Canterbury Clothing and Pub charity's for the funding, it was much appreciated.

As we arrived at the airport and said goodbye to our families, I knew that I would not be going to see them for at least Two weeks. We all boarded the plane and I was very happy, but a bit nervous. But the nervousness disappeared after a while. The plane trip lasted for ages, 11 hours. At least we had each other to keep us company. We had a good flight over so that was good. On the trip back home we were all eager to see our families but sad to say goodbye to our host families. The trip back was a little rough and very tiring. But it was still fun.

The Japanese culture is very different from here in New Zealand. But it was easy to adapt to. Except from the Japanese style toilet. Yuck! The food was interesting. The only problem was that I don't like fish. Other than that, I enjoyed the food.

I really enjoyed my host stay family. They were the best. They treated me like royalty. I was really sad to say goodbye. But I still plan to keep in touch. I was lucky enough for them to take me to Osaka and Kyoto for the weekend. Where we stayed in a hotel and visited some historical places. Everything I sore was so beautiful.

But the big highlight for me was the school. I loved it. Tamashima-kita junior high school was its name; it was the best and biggest school I'd seen in Japan. Everyone at Tamashima-kita was so kind and helpful to me. I made many new friends. At the school I really liked the clubs afterwards. They were a great way to met new people. I enjoyed the running club the most.

In Japan when we went sight seeing, it was great, but we couldn't have done it without the help of Mrs Onishi and Bill Gourdie. They were our Japanese translators. They were a big help.

I really enjoyed meeting as a team and doing things. I have to say that the amusement park was the best place that we went to. Washuzan Highland, the best amusement park I've ever been to. I loved the standing up roller coaster and the backwards one too, they were so wicked. It was also cool when we were on T.V and in the newspaper. That was when we met the mayor of Kurashiki, Mayor Nakada.

Overall my time in Japan was great. It is an experience I'll never forget. Once again thank you to everyone who made it possible for me to go. And for everyone who helped with everything.

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By Sam Berry