

Kurashiki Student Exchange Trip, 2006
By Laura Claridge

When I first discovered that I had been accepted for the student exchange to Kurashiki, Japan, I was amazed. When I started highschool, Japan was the last place I'd thought I'd be. But three months later, I was sitting on a plane with my new friend, Lara, travelling to Japan.

Waiting to meet my host-family for the first time was nerve-racking. I was glad for the night we spent in the hotel, it gave me a chance to get used to being in Japan. But my worries were soon proven pointless. My host-family, the Higuchi's, are some of the nicest people I've ever met.

I first thought going to school would be the worst thing ever, and that four days was too much time to be spent there. But after my first day at Tatsumi Junior High, I wanted to stay there forever. At school, I met some great people and made some amazing friends. The girls were extremely nice; we had an awesome time playing volleyball and talking. The guys were just as nice. And their choir, it was unbelievable! I thought that my friends could sing well, but they are nothing compared to these kids. It completely blew me away. I made some great memories with all of them, and I can't wait to be back to see them all again.

The food in Japan is interesting. It got to the point where I just thought "well, it's not going to kill me, who cares what it is? Just try it." And that's exactly what I did. I ate shrimp, fish and cow's tongue. While I may not have liked the shrimp, the cow's tongue was actually quite tasty. We were at this restaurant and my host-mother told me it was cow's tongue and I was like, what the heck, and I ate it. I never would've done anything like that back home. Now I'll try basically anything put in front of me.

I only had three problems on the trip. One was Bill, but I think he just plain didn't like us. Another was the Japanese lesson we had. They seemed to teach us what we'd already learnt at school and it quickly lost it's novelty. And the other was having to leave. It's harder than most people think, leaving your new friends and a whole new place behind. But we knew from the beginning we'd have to leave...

There is nothing bad I can say about anybody I met while in Japan, they are all nice and kind and just plain amazing. The trip was a trip of a life time and it's changed me forever. I'm already planning my trip back with my friend Lara, who also went on the exchange. So we'll be back by the end of next year, that's how much we enjoyed it.