

Kurashiki Trip 2006

On the 29th September 2006 we embarked on the trip of a lifetime, finally after all those months of waiting, the day was here! Arriving at Christchurch Airport at 4 30am, we booked in our luggage, said our goodbyes and set off on the long journey to Japan! Twelve hours later we arrived in Osaka, all very tired, but extremely excited. There was no time to stop and rest, it was straight through customs and off to catch the bullet train. The station was buzzing with people and it was 'hold on to your bags and follow the leaders!' About two hours later we reached our destination, Kurashiki city.

We stayed our first night in Japan at '1, 2, 3 HOTEL'. We were all very fascinated by the different toilets and, heated toilet seats! That night we flopped into our beds for a good nights sleep. The next day we went to City Hall and met our Host Families, feeling both excited and nervous. The nervousness soon passed when I realised that my host family were very nice people, and made me feel so welcome.

The first week of my journey I attended Nishi Junior High school with my younger Host sister Yuka. I found school fun, everyone was so friendly and made me feel very welcome. The school was very old, which surprised me, but I had a great time and I experienced many new things, I ate a school lunch everyday which sometimes didn't look very appealing but I gave it all a go and it wasn't all that bad. All of the children had club after school, which is a sport of their choice. Also in my first week our group visited an Elementary School. We performed for them, and they taught us how to play different Japanese style games and how to make udon, Japanese noodles.

In the second week we went sight-seeing. At Mitsubishi Motors car factory, we saw how the cars were made. I think that it is definitely more interesting for the boys. We also went to see a Japanese garden, which was

very beautiful, it would have been better if we had gone in summer or spring, and I thought it was a lot like what we see in New Zealand.

My favourite part of the trip, was our visit to Hiroshima. I remember as soon as we got in there we all just went silent and felt the sadness of the people. We saw the Atom Dome which was incredible. We placed the cranes that we had made in the Peace Park. At the Museum we saw all the pictures and monuments of what actually happened when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. You can never really know what it is like till you go there and see all the devastating photos and read all the stories, it had a huge effect on all of us. The group all felt so privileged to be there and have the opportunity see what it was like.

Later in the week the group went to Aeon Mall, a large shopping complex. The shopping was great! All of us girls went crazy!

This was a great experience for me I found the Host Family programme really good especially enjoyed the opportunity to experience the Japanese culture, My host family took me to many places like Tivoli Park and the Bikan area, I also played tennis with my family each weekend!

I had a great trip; the Leaders (David and Junko) were absolutely fantastic, and really nice people who put in a lot of hard work to make this trip possible. The group all enjoyed themselves, and would all go back in a second. It is a really great opportunity to travel and experience a different culture, and make a new set of friends, both from New Zealand and Japan.

It was a trip of a lifetime. I encourage everyone to go - the Japanese are great friendly people, and made the trip that much more fun!

Anna McNeill