

REPORT from Jess TODD of Rangī Ruru Girls High

When I applied for the Kurashiki exchange, I hardly thought I'd get in, but after about a month's wait I found out that I'd been accepted. I was crazily happy, as I absolutely love Japan and the culture being brought up around it with my parents loving it as well. And of course my parents were going to Tokyo in November and I wanted to go to Japan too.

When we arrived at our hotel in Okayama, on the first night in Japan, I couldn't believe I was in another country with a group of people my age without parental supervision. But of course Cheryl and Newton were wonderful substitutes.

What made my Japanese experience even better was that I had an awesome host family. They were so wonderful to me. It was also rather nice having the mother and father rather competent at English, which made things much easier. Though it was really tempting to speak in English all the time, I tried to talk in as much Japanese as I could. And I'm willing to say that my Japanese defiantly did improve while I was there.

School was a major part of the trip because the days were so long and different. I went to Tamashima-Kita Junior High School for four days. Tamashima-Kita is a really lovely school, which has been done up recently. The buildings are all really colourful and the classrooms are really nice, fresh and new. Everyone was so friendly and welcoming, they would always shout hello and did everything they could to make me feel welcome.

Kurashiki is just such an amazing city. We go to do some really cool things like a day in a traditional Japanese temple, Okayama Castle, Washuzan Highland Theme Park and so much more. We took a day trip one day to Hiroshima and Miyajima Island, which were both so fantastic. The Hiroshima Peace Park and Museum has a huge wow-factor attached to it. When you really get into the museum you can find lots of things written in English and I learnt lots more about what actually happened when the bomb exploded.

Going on this exchange has been one of the best experiences I've had to date. It is an awesome exchange and I would recommend it to anyone. When I'm older I want to live in Japan and when I came back I knew I wanted to live there.



Jess Todd