

# REPORT from Thomas WEDDELL

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At the beginning of Year 10, some few centuries ago now, I would have never dreamed that I'd be making the 9,498km journey between Christchurch and the Japanese city (to which I was unaware existed) Kurashiki. Yet, after soon settling in to the school year, my Japanese teacher announced that fifteen (well really she said fourteen, the fifteenth was to be later announced) lucky Christchurch school student would be given the opportunity to 1) host a Japanese billet for two weeks, and 2) visit Japan ourselves for an equal period of time! Naturally, the entire class all became very excited and each student hurried to put their names forward. However, after it was publicized that any applicants would have to write an essay, the number of people still keen, was whittled down to a mere few...

A few weeks passed, along with an interview from the dashing duo of Newton Dodge and Cheryl Thorne, and finally, I received an e-mail stating my acceptance into the lucky fourteen. I was ecstatic to say the least.

Yet this elation was enthused even more so when my billet from Japan, little Masataka, came to stay with me and those other people who live in my house. Time with him flew by, as did much of the time afterwards, and it was not long before I was at the airport, awaited my very own departure. (Yes, it is true. I indeed have reached the crux of this essay after stretching the first part out for 253 words.)

My first impression of Japan was: 'wow, this is hot.' This really didn't change much over the next few weeks, yet many other things did.

Firstly, and this is probably the most astonishing; I was in Japan! Yes, I'd built up a love for the Japanese language over the previous two years and now it was finally time to strengthen that and gain otherwise.

One of my favourite parts would've had to have been school. Higashi JHS really made a great effort in securing mine, and my fellow distinguished delegate's comfort by inducing a range of traditional activities such as calligraphy and origami. Other favourites included my host family (the awesome Taniguchis) and the day spent in both Hiroshima and Miyajima. Not forgetting of course Washuzan highland and Universal Studios!

It was with the utmost lament that I boarded the plane, heading back for Christchurch, I'd grown so close to my host family, and indeed Japan its self. It was two weeks I will never forget.

A big thank you must go to the City Council (well both of them), Mrs Simcock for the embedding of the idea and Newton Dodge and Cheryl Thorne, because well, it was by their doing that I had the experience of my life.

Thomas Weddell

