

My Five Unforgettable Weeks in the Land of the Cherryblossoms, the Anime and the Smiling People

My trip to Japan, organized and financed by MEXT, was really successful, I made a lot of new friends and experienced the life of a real Japanese family. I met some of the students from other countries already at Frankfurt Airport.



My friends

Tokyo



After arriving in Japan, we had a quick orientation held by IFA staff then we went to the hotel.

When traveling through the center of Tokyo even the kids from big cities were amazed, because Tokyo is so huge and beautiful. After arriving to the hotel we had dinner then we observed the city from our panorama-view rooms.

Next day from early morning to late afternoon we were taught how to behave with Japanese people, and how to understand Japanese mentality. These lessons helped a lot later, when I lived with my host family.

On the 3rd and 4th day we studied Japanese in a private school. In the evenings we explored the area around the hotel, took lots of pictures and generally just had fun with the others.

Before the 6th day -that we spent with shopping- we visited the famous Edo Tokyo Museum, went sightseeing in the Ryogoku area by boat and before returning to the hotel we visited Senso-ji which is one of the most famous shrine, Asakusa. After becoming "purified" by the help of some rituals, we took a look at the spectacular temples and statues.



After the day spent with shopping mentioned above, we said goodbye to our new friends, wished luck to each other, and each of us headed to his/her host family. I took my way to Asahikawa, which is right in the middle of the most northern island of Japan (Hokkaido). Asahikawa is a rather small town with 250 000 inhabitants. For me -since I come from the biggest city of Hungary- it was a bit boring at the beginning, but after the Tokyo rush some peace was good.

In the 3 weeks I spent in Asahikawa I learnt a lot of things that you can only learn if you experience it. I had already heard before that Japanese students are generally shier than Europeans, but here I saw that the difference is really big. When I first introduced myself to my new class they didn't say anything, they were just sitting and smiling.

If I smiled at a girl while walking in the corridor, she started laughing and immediately started whispering something to her girlfriends. The school life differs a lot, too, students never ask anything, and usually sit and talk quietly in the brakes.

During the school festival -which was held at the time of my stay- they were much more relaxed, but they really wanted to win the dance and chorus contest, as I was informed, this is really important

Tea ceremony



for a Japanese student. Some students (even boys!!) started to cry when they were told that they only got 2nd place in the dancing contest and 3rd place in the chorus. Speaking about the contests! Being part of the class - even if only for 3 weeks - I had to participate in these events. It wasn't a must, but -as a Danish exchange student, studying in my school, too, told me - that if I didn't participate they probably wouldn't let me "join" the class community.

My Class



The 2 next weeks weren't so exciting, the students were already having fun in the summer holiday in their minds. After school I usually played table-tennis in the table-tennis club, then went home to my host family. I spent a lot of time with them, at weekends we had a lot of fun together. We visited flower farms, a cherry farm where we could eat as many cherries as we wanted to, went playing minigolf, tennis, and even

Flower Farm, Hokkaido



watched the animals in Japan's best zoo, the Asahiyama Zoo.

I learnt a lot from my family, not only the language, but about habits as well. It was really interesting to see how a real Japanese family lives.

My host family and me

Unfortunately my home-stay came to an end, so I returned to Tokyo where my friends – all of them excited by their wonderful experiences – were already waiting for me. We couldn't talk about our adventures for long, because we went on a sightseeing tour. First we



visited the manga and electrical district, Akihabara. After that came the Imperial Palace and Tokyo Tower. We spent the next day sightseeing, followed by visiting and staying in a Japanese style hotel. After a night spent in a tatami-room we observed the sights of the Hakone region, then we returned to Tokyo. On the final day we were just preparing our baggage ready for returning home and writing greetings in our friends' notebooks.



Manga shop, Akihabara

The final day came, and we said a sad goodbye to our friends, and checked each others' e-mail addresses again. On the 15-hour Tokyo-Frankfurt-Budapest trip I recalled the past 5 weeks, and browsed the photos I had taken again. When I left Ferihegy Terminal 2 I felt that I would never forget these 5 weeks.

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