



Rowan
from
Orangeville Highlands
to
Japan

An Experience Like No Other

It's hard to believe that I'm hitting the six-month mark on my exchange now. I guess that saying about time flying when you're having fun really is true. And I still can't wrap my head around how fast my exchange is going by, because if I'm being completely honest it feels like only last month that I was writing my first Beaver Tale for everyone to read. In my last BeaverTale I talked a lot about my initial experiences in Japan, how school was going and what that looked like as well as some of what I had been up to. This time around is going to be similar, just maybe less about the detailed things like schedules and my daily life. Because in that regard not a whole lot has changed. As of right now I am staying with my third of five host families. I have had a really great time with my current family, and I will be sad to leave them in the coming days.

A lot has happened in the past couple of months since I last wrote to you. I experienced my first onsen (Japanese bath house), I got the opportunity to interpret for a local bus tour and my New Year started off with a bang when Japan was hit with a 7.5 magnitude earthquake. Experiencing something like an earthquake, especially one that big, was something I was definitely not expecting to happen during my time in Japan. I knew it was a possibility but never could have imagined an earthquake of that magnitude being so close to me. The crazy thing that I found out about earthquakes was that you will hear it before you feel it. I was in my room minding my own business just having some time to myself. At around two pm I heard this very deep rumbling sound. It lasted for a few seconds before the house started shaking extremely violently. In less than ten seconds the shaking stopped and I sat on my bed for a second dazed by the fact that I had just experienced an earthquake and a big one at that. After being dumbfounded for a second, I ran downstairs to make sure my host family was okay. Thankfully everyone was okay. I then checked on

all my friends to make sure they were all right and luckily, they were as well. For the remainder of the day my host family and I sat around the T.V. watching the news praying that there was nothing worse to come. And there was not.

I was woken up by an aftershock a few days later which I am telling you right now is not the kind of alarm anyone wants to wake up too. My family and I were pretty shaken up by the event but luckily everything ended up being okay and the only damage the house sustained was a porcelain doll that fell off of a shelf at the front door. What a way to start the New Year eh?

Apart from the earthquake I had an amazing start to the new year. I was able to go to an onsen for the first time which was a very interesting experience. I got to eat lots of traditional Japanese food, I wore a kimono for the first time, and I got to take a bath in an onsen up in the mountains. Being able to experience an onsen up in the mountains was something I never really thought I'd get to do but I'm glad I did. The light snowfall we had at the time also added to the charm of the whole experience and made it just that little bit more enjoyable for me. However nice consistent weather is not something you should expect if you ever come to Japan because a week later it rained then went back to snowing. There was hail at some point after that and now in the middle of February it has been hovering around twenty degrees for the past couple of days. I really don't understand Japanese weather and I probably never will.

I want to end this report by giving a huge thank you to everyone that has made this possible for me. I've been given the chance to do some truly incredible things. It truly is hard to put into words how grateful I am for everyone that has made this happen for me. Without both my club in Canada and Japan, my family and friends, and The Rotary Youth Exchange program my life would be very different. So, I just want to give everyone a huge thank you, the opportunity you have given me is one that I will be grateful for for the rest of my life.

See you all in three months.

Sayonara,

Rowan.



