



Rowan
from
Orangeville Highlands
to
Japan

"The Journey Begins"

As a young kid I used to hear about how some of my family members went on Rotary exchanges and how amazing the experience was. When I first heard these stories, I wasn't able to truly appreciate and understand how great of an opportunity this really was. As I got older however I started to gain more of an understanding about what my family was talking about, and it sparked a curiosity in me. A curiosity that would take me to the other side of the world where I now have been given the opportunity to explore a new country and everything it has to offer.

My journey began after a long 13 hour flight into Tokyo. Completely exhausted and hoping for a smooth transition to my connecting flight. Unfortunately I didn't get so lucky. After picking up my bags I headed to drop them off on my connecting flight only to find out that I was too late to drop them off. Now annoyed and more exhausted than ever I was given a new ticket for a different flight. The only issue was that my new connecting flight didn't come for an additional four or five hours. Too stressed to sleep but too tired to stay awake I drifted in and out of sleep until my departure. Finally able to rest a little I passed out instantly on my flight and only woke up when I felt the tires hit the asphalt. I finally arrived at the Komatsu airport around 10:30 pm and was greeted by the smiling faces of my host mother and some of my new club members.

After a warm welcome and a somewhat awkward first week and a half it was time for me to start school. Summer break in Japan ends around the same time as it does in Canada so it made transitioning back into life as a student pretty easy.

Before I started school, I got a quick tour of the school and got to meet some of the teachers. On my first day of school I introduced myself to the teaching staff before heading to my new classroom and introducing myself to my new classmates.



I have to admit I was nervous to see what my new classmates would think of me, so it felt like a massive weight was lifted off of my shoulders when I was greeted by lots of smiles and people that just wanted to get to know me. I quickly adjusted to the new school setting and made friends very quickly.

Typically during the week I'll wake up for school around 7:00 am, get dressed and then go eat breakfast. After breakfast I'll finish getting ready for school and then leave the house around 8:00 am. It takes me about 10 minutes to get to school by bike. By the time I get to school it's almost first period, so I head to class and get ready to start my day. During my first month or so in school I just self studied and learned how to read and write. As time went on I was slowly added to more and more lessons and now I'm participating in all of my classes as much as I can. After school I have fencing which runs until 6:30 pm and I end up getting home around 7:00. On Monday, Thursday, and Friday I have 6 periods and on Tuesday and Wednesday I have 7 periods. Period seven is typically used as a study period but sometimes it gets replaced with an assembly or some other event the school is having.

Time to discuss language. Heading to Japan I knew that I would have to learn one of the most difficult languages in the world, but I was ready for the challenge. I think one of the main reasons Japanese is difficult for English speakers is because the order in which words are spoken is different. You also have to learn three different alphabets in order to read and write properly. As of right now my reading and writing skills are pretty good and speaking is coming along. While I hate to admit slower than I'd like, it's probably because I spent the majority of my time learning to read and write. However now that I have a pretty good grasp on reading and writing I should be able to focus a lot more on my speaking and by the time BeaverTale number 2 rolls around I should be able to have some pretty good conversations with people.

Coming to Japan has been a dream of mine for years and finally getting to live out that dream is something that I never could have imagined happening in a million years, and now that I'm here I almost can't believe that what I am experiencing is real. I have

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had so many great experiences thus far that I never could have imagined were possible and I can't wait to continue my journey in Japan.

Before I sign off for now I want to say thank you to Both the Orangeville Highlands and Hakusan Ishikawa Rotary clubs as well as everyone that has helped get me to where I am now, and one last thing. To anyone who may be reading this who is on the fence about whether or not you want to go live in another country for a year Here's my advice. Take that leap of faith, after being here only three months I can assure you that it is an experience like no other and you will not regret your decision. Signing off for now.

See you in three months,

Sincerely,

Rowan Laidlaw.

