

Estelle McCabe - sponsored by The Rotary Club of Beaudesert in 2013

This time last year I was turning my summer tie over to the winter one, pulling my jumper on and slipping into my blazer and getting ready for a day. But now, I am in Japan among the beautiful cherry blossoms and immersing myself in the Japanese culture, language, cuisine and, of course, school life.



Yes, I am one of those fortunate people who get to participate in a Rotary Youth Exchange at the end of Year 12. For the past three months I have been living in Gifu Prefecture near Kyoto, Japan and honestly, it is like a dream come true and I'm having the year of my life!

While I was at All Hallows' I studied Japanese for about 4 years, so, when I arrived in Japan I was able to communicate basic things with the locals. However, saying I had a lot to learn would be an understatement! And learning more of the language and becoming more confident in my skills was my main goal during this exchange and since I arrived on Japanese soil I can already see big improvements in my language!

I attend a local co-ed school where the students are incredibly friendly and always treat me very well! But, it has been a bit of an adjustment for me, as schooling in Japan is quite different to what I was used to at AHS. First, school starts

at 8.30am and the final bell rings at 4pm, but there is only one break to eat lunch, and this is done inside the classroom. All the students are especially studious, and I was surprised the students clean the school every day. After school activities are equally important for students too – many committing around 10 hours a week to their chosen activities.

Being an exchange student has given me so many wonderful opportunities. For instance, I was able to dress up in my host mother's kimono and walk among the cherry blossoms, immersed myself in an outside hot spring where the snow fell magically around me, I've tried all sorts of Japanese cuisine, met amazing people from all over the world all while becoming more confident in my Japanese skills by speaking in front of my whole school and at various Rotary events.

Rotary is a very big part of my exchange. In Japan, being a Rotarian is a symbol of status unlike in Australia where members are mostly small business owners and key local members of the community. In May, I will attend a Rotary World Peace Conference in Hiroshima where I am one of a lucky seven who get to present a speech in front of over 1000 people!

I am definitely enjoying my time here and can't wait to explore more of Japan! Thank you to The Rotary Club of Beaudesert.