

# JAPAN 2012



This summer I spent two weeks in Japan with 7 other girls and two leaders, I can honestly say this was the best two weeks of my life. On Saturday 11th of August 2012 we got on a short haul flight from London Heathrow to Frankfurt and then a long haul flight from Frankfurt to Narita, Tokyo. Because of time difference and flight times the first glimpses of Tokyo were seen through blurry eyes and tired minds as we were all half asleep when we arrived in Japan at 10.30AM (Japanese time). As it was afternoon for us during the flight, I didn't really sleep, that and the fact that I was running on adrenaline and excitement. So when we landed in Tokyo all we wanted to do was sleep. Overall the flight was much better than I expected it to be.

# TOKYO

During the two weeks we spent three whole days and four nights in Tokyo. The two days and two nights at the beginning, one night in the middle and one day and night at the end. I loved Tokyo, it was just what I expected it to be and much more. Whilst in Tokyo we saw the Tokyo tower, we went on a boat trip, visited many temples and shrines, the Pokemon centre and the Kodokan (national Judo centre).



Above is one of the streets opposite our hotel. At night all the signs were brightly lit up. Right is Fiona and I wearing the Kimonos that we bought on the first day.



We also visited the Edo-Tokyo museum on the second day of the trip. Tokyo used to be called 'Edo' which literally means bay entrance. It's a museum all about the history of the capital and the royal family. When we were at one of the oldest temples in Japan we all got our fortunes, mine the called A Regular Fortune. After the international camp we stayed in Tokyo for one night at the NYC (national youth centre). This was the Olympic village for the Tokyo games 1964 and it has been converted into a youth hostel and educational sports center for teenagers.

# HOMESTAY

For two days and two nights we stayed with a Japanese family. Fiona and I were together for home stay which made it a bit easier but the others were on their own. Chisaki Ikeda and her family were lovely, they made us feel so at home and they were very hospitable. I miss Chisaki loads and Fiona and I really want her to come to England and stay with us ☺

The homestay families all lived in Saitama City just north of Tokyo. On the first day, Chisaki took us to a temple where her mum goes to and then we went shopping in a famous shopping centre in Saitama city centre. They made us Japanese food but made sure that it was regular Japanese food rather than wacky cuisine and they even made us eggs and bacon for breakfast on the second day! Chisaki's Girl Scout group had prepared a party for us on day two. So we went and all her group were excited to see us, we spent the day cooking and playing games with the group and at the end they each gave us a beautiful kimono and japans clog set. They were all so nice to us and it was really sad when we had to leave especially as Chisaki was the only homestay not attending the camp because she was 17.

From left:  
View, Ping  
(two  
Taiwanese  
girls),  
Chisaki,  
Me, Fiona.



# INTERNATIONAL GIRL SCOUT CAMP



The camp lasted three days (16<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup>) and took place at the Togakushi campsite. There were girl scouts from Thailand, Taiwan, Japan and England. We got put in patrols within units. I was in Forest Unit, Patrol TTO. In my patrol there was: Tano, Yuki, Ayene, Misaki and Kasu (Japanese girl scouts) Jeep (a thai girl) and me. None of them spoke English and I didn't speak Japanese so the communication was through over enthusiastic hand gestures and pointing. It sounds really difficult but actually it was fun, the whole three days was like a big game of charades! The first day was mainly traveling so camp activities only included building a table in your patrol and cooking dinner with them. On the second day we could choose our activity. Emma, Katy and I chose to climb Mount. Meno (1748m above sea level). Four hours of climbing in sweltering heat and we had reached the summit. I was well worth it, the view was absolutely stunning (picture above). On the third and final day it was camp open day so girl scouts from all over Saitama could come and visit the camp for a day. We had a table which we decorated with English things and we put photos from home up and talk to everyone about England. We also had that day to do swaps. Saying goodbye to my patrol was really hard and a few of the girls started crying (me included). ☹

# KYOTO

Kyoto is the cultural capital of Japan and former residence of the Royal family. We spent three days and three nights in Kyoto. We had a tour guide for two of the three days. Whilst in Kyoto we visited 4 temples, the Imperial palace in Kyoto, a bamboo forest a karaoke bar and a shopping centre.

The day we arrived we checked into our rooms straight away. The rooms were lovely and spacious; they were a mix between a traditional Japanese guesthouse room and a modern hotel. We spent the first night in a shopping centre where we all spent far too much money stocking up on gifts, trinkets, clothes and Japanese accessories. All the temples and shrines and palaces were beautiful. Kyoto was boiling though, even hotter than Tokyo, Saitama and Togakushi!

On the last night, Emma, Fiona, Molly WJ, Katie M and I went to a private Karaoke bar. Where you paid 300 yen for half an hour and you got your own room with a karaoke machine. It was so much fun, one of my best memories of the trip!



# WEATHER AND FOOD

Japan is known for its humidity during the summer months. It is prone to large thunder and lightening storms and also very dry humid hot days. We had a mixture of both of them. For the most it was absolutely sweltering and humid. Then we had about five storms when we were over there but we welcomed to rain! However during a storm it would still be really hot.

The food was something that everybody was apprehensive about, nobody really knew what to expect. Well. Breakfast most days was miso soup with a rice ball. Lunch would be rice with something, either a curry or fish or just flavoured rice. Dinner could be anything but it would always come with rice. We all tried most things but there were some things that we just couldn't eat, like a bowl of grated radish with chilli, or squid niblets with ginger slices. We were hungry pretty much all the time because we basically lived off rice for two weeks but it was an experience!



In a temple during a  
thunder storm (left)

Untouched food (below)



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I cannot explain how much I enjoyed this trip, I would give anything to go back. I got really close to the girls I went with and will remain friends with them. I made so many friends whilst I was out there and we overcame the language barrier. The trip was well worth all the money, time and planning over the last eight months. I will remember this trip forever.

I would just like to say thank you to Jenny for giving me this opportunity and everyone at the Pax Lodge weekend. To Katy M and Mandy for organizing the whole trip. To everyone who supported my fundraising and to the Fiona, Molly WJ, Emma, Heather, Eleanor, Katie A and Molly B for making the trip really special ☺



**11<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST - 25<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2012**

**BY SOPHIE  
MEYER (14)**

