

My initial arrival to Japan was a rough one due to delayed flights and a missed train, but the university staff was extremely helpful in communicating with me to try and find solutions. After arriving at YPU I met the school staff and student tutors who I would be interacting with over the next year. I felt at home immediately and could not ask for a better group of people to support me during my exchange to YPU. Over the next few weeks, I participated in multiple activities arranged by YPU for the exchange students and thoroughly enjoyed all of them. Participating in mikoshi at Akada Shrine, the trip to Akiyoshido, the barbeque with the local ALTs, and more are memories I will hold onto for a long time. During the barbeque event I met the person who would end up being one of my best friends during my time in Yamaguchi. Along with another English-speaking YPU staff member and 3 other local ALTs, we would meet on most Thursdays from 6pm to 9pm to play Dungeons & Dragons. While I did not end up partaking in any clubs while at YPU, I did make several friends and on occasion visited their clubs. One such club was the soccer club, which another exchange student from Bishop’s was part of, with which I joined in a practice session and scrimmage one Wednesday evening.

My homestay was a wonderful experience. At first when filling out the paperwork for living in Yamaguchi, I was under the impression that the survey for a homestay was for if we wished to stay with a local family over the duration of both semesters. With this in mind, I wrote some requests that would simply not be feasible over just the



two and a half days that the homestay lasted. Even so, they did their absolute best to fulfill my requests and even went above and beyond. We travelled to Nagato and visited Motonosumi Shrine and the onsen town of Nagato Yumoto. On the way back, we drove through Akiyoshidai plateau, the areas I had simply seen from a distance during the trip with YPU to Akiyoshido. On the final day of the homestay, we went to a festival at Hofu Tenmangu Shrine, followed by a session of karaoke. Unfortunately, the mother of the family could not join us for the final day of the homestay, and she was our translator between Japanese and English when I had a hard time speaking or understanding Japanese, but

communication went well regardless. I will forever be grateful to my host family for the time we spent together and hope to repay them one day.

Both of my student tutors were extremely helpful during the year I spent in Yamaguchi. I had a great time chatting with them and will keep in contact with them in hopes of keeping our friendship alight. One of them will be arriving in Quebec to attend my school, Bishop’s University, at the end of August, and I hope I can provide the same assistance she did for me. My other student tutor helped me obtain permission to work in Japan during the 2nd semester, however I unfortunately never ended up actually working during my stay. He also helped me with all my final paperwork to leave Japan and assisted me in sending packages back home. Both tutors exceeded what was asked of them to ensure my experience in Japan was a great one.



I also managed to meet a few local friends who are not associated with YPU during my stay. In particular, one gentleman who I met in October invited me to make shimenawa ropes at Daijingu Shrine, where I met several other locals who share my hobbies, and we have made a group chat on LINE where we talk often.

During my solo trip across much of Japan during the Spring break in March, I also met several other who I have kept contact with. A few locals and foreigners in Tokyo, a former Taiwanese soldier who is friends with a local to Oarai, a community of people in Kobe, and an American airman who has a very similar job to my own in Misawa, Aomori. Other places that I managed to visit during my trip that I have always wished to go to include Hiroshima, Tachikawa, Osaka, Kure, and Hirosaki. The following month myself and the American airman spent a week driving around Hiroshima, Kure, Etajima, and Suo-Oshima where we visited many museums, cafes, and small events. Two of the highlights of that week was when we drove all the way to Suo-Oshima to visit the Battleship Mutsu memorial museum, and when we stumbled upon the Battleship Haruna memorial on Etajima while leaving an oyster restaurant, as I enjoy military history, and at both places we paid our respects to the men who lost their lives on these vessels. It was a very fulfilling experience.

Finally, I would like to thank the teachers and other staff of YPU with whom I interacted with during the past year. In particular I enjoyed the classes of Iwanaka-sensei, Yamao-sensei, Mrs. Amy Wilson, and Mr. Mark Swanson who was my teacher tutor, and the teachers for ikebana and volleyball who I unfortunately have forgotten the names of and cannot find. Everyone was very helpful in helping me catch up with any material I had missed. Although there was a language barrier, I thoroughly enjoyed ikebana and had a good time learning from the teacher. I would also like to thank the volleyball teacher for allowing more than the maximum limit of students to attend her class, as registration was meant to be done by lottery, as volleyball is my favourite sport and I do not have many opportunities to play it in Canada.



I had an absolutely wonderful time during my exchange at YPU. Yamaguchi itself is incredibly beautiful, and I often found myself riding around the town and its surroundings on bicycle and stopping often to take in the scenery. The students and school staff were very friendly, and extremely helpful whenever I had any problems. If I was more proficient in Japanese and was allowed by my home university to do so, I would have loved to spend my final academic year at YPU. Unfortunately, I must return to Canada, which itself was an interesting little adventure, and finish one final year of university. I plan to help my student tutor in the same way she helped me to get accustomed to Quebec and Bishop’s University during her exchange. After graduating, I plan to attend a culinary school for pastries for a year, before trying to apply for a work visa in Japan, and hopefully return to Yamaguchi.

Thank you all again, and I hope to see you all in two years.