



27th MILE Programme

Personal Reflection

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Year 2

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As someone who isn't very independent, I was a little hesitant and worried before embarking on this trip to Kanazawa. However, after going through the 10 days in Kanazawa, I think I have grown to be more independent and at the same time gain lots of valuable experience and lessons as well. The homestay with our Japanese host families and the activities planned out by Kanazawa Technical College (KTC) made the trip nothing short of fun.



(My Japanese Buddy/Host)

There were a few challenges that I faced over in Kanazawa, with the first the presence of a language barrier between me and my host family. They could understand and speak English to a small extent, but for most part we utilised technology (Google Translate) and hand gestures to understand each other. This resulted in a mix of broken English and Japanese, but at the end of the day, we were still able to get our points across in our conversations. Also, our Japanese hosts were very hospitable and welcoming, they made us feel as though we were at home throughout our entire stay. My host mother took the effort to cook dinner for me despite her busy work schedule and would fetch us to and from school each day as well. My host would also try to entertain and interact with me despite his busy school schedule.



(They took the effort to bring us out after school for dinner and shopping around Kanazawa)

It is also through the homestay where I realised that it is very easy to take things for granted in Singapore. The Japanese there observe punctuality very strictly and they would always try to be earlier than the arranged time. As someone who procrastinate and laze around at home a lot, I had no one to rely on to “push” me to get things done. So it was kind of challenging every day to drag myself out of bed and prepare all my stuff in advance so as to be ready to leave with the host for school early each day.



Additionally, as someone who is really picky with food, I had to step out of my comfort zone and eat the food that my host family took the effort to make for me, as

it was really rude to pick out food and leave them one side. Also, during a lecture that Professor Mamoru Mukai gave while we visited KTC, he told us about a word called “Mottainai” which translates to “wasteful” or “what a waste”. He said that the Japanese people would always try to finish their food and not waste any of it. When we visited a junior high school, I was shocked to see that the students would finish every last bit of food that was provided in their school lunch and those who could not finish the food would have others to help them eat the rest. Whereas, in Singapore we would often see students just returning their trays or leaving it on the tables with a portion of food remaining, be it the food not tasting good or us having no appetite to eat it, wasting a lot of food. So after returning from Japan, I actually made a point to try to eat everything that has been given to me and not “Mottainai”.



(Kyoto Daytrip)

I am also really appreciative of my host mother for taking the effort to drive us, together with Natalie and her host to Kyoto, which was a 3-hour drive from Kanazawa. It was a 3-hour car ride there and she brought us to see the Fushimi Inari Shrine which had the famous 10,00 torii gates. She also showed us the things Japanese people did at the shrine, such as praying and asking for blessings, such as lifting a medium sized rock to see if your prayer/request was achievable. If you could lift it, it meant that the prayer/request was feasible and achievable, if you couldn't it

meant the opposite. It was a unique experience that she went the extra mile to let us enjoy.

All in all, I am grateful for the opportunity to go on this trip and it not only allowed me to learnt more about Japan, it also gave me the opportunity to learn more about myself and change for the better. I am also really thankful for the warm hospitality that KTC and my host provided for the 10 days that we were there, taking the time and effort to show us around Kanazawa, allowing us to learn more about the place and enjoy ourselves.