
2014-15 Postcards

Postcards from Abroad

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Japanese New Year

Van Ha
Linfield College

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2015-01-28 Japanese New Year

Since the day I came to Japan, I have been appreciating what Linfield College gave me. The friendship and confidence I achieved at Linfield continues to support me through my new journey in Japan. Thanks to Linfield, I met Mariko and Yutaro, Rikkyo University alumni and former exchange students at Linfield in 2011. They have given me great opportunities to learn about Japanese tradition and culture.

I can say, this New Year holiday was the most special holiday for me since I began to study abroad. I learned many things about Japanese traditions through my visit at Yutaro's grandmother's house in Osakijima Island, near Hiroshima. From Tokyo, it took 5 hours by the shinkansen (bullet train), one hour by normal train, and about 30 minutes by ferry. The island looked deserted with many old houses and an abandoned factory, but it had beautiful views of the ocean and mountains. I spent 3 days at Yutaro's house with his family: his grandmother, parents, uncle, two younger sisters and a fat cat. Yutaro's family had taught me many valuable things about Japanese traditions and foods at New Years.

On New Year 's Eve, the whole family gathered around a heating table (named kotatsu) and watched TV shows together. Although I did not understand much, the cozy atmosphere really made me happy. I had been away from home for nearly a year; and the study abroad life had always been busy, so I had never felt that relaxed. On New Year's Day, we did the first temple visit (called hatsumoude) in an old and small temple on the island. And on the 2nd day, Yutaro and his parents brought me to a beautiful mountain and we took a small hike there.

Although Osakijima is a small and deserted island, I really enjoyed the peaceful atmosphere and the beautiful people there. For me, it was a break from the crowded city of Tokyo and a valuable opportunity to learn about Japanese family culture. After leaving the island, I missed the family a lot. I appreciate that they treated me like a family member and taught me many precious things about Japanese culture.

Van Ha