

justinalexander

Nagoya, Japan

JUSTIN'S MAJOR(S): finance, accounting, international business and Japanese

YEAR/TERM ABROAD: academic year 2001-2002

REASON YOU CHOSE THIS PROGRAM: I knew I wanted to do a year program in Japan, and it was the best economical value. I also knew that I didn't want to study abroad in Tokyo—it's too big.

FAVORITE CLASSES: Japanese language classes, art classes: Shodo (calligraphy), Hanga (woodblock printing) and Sumie (painting)



Justin Alexander poses for a picture with his host mom, Yumi, and host brother, 5-year-old Yu. Alexander said that some of his best memories came from all the traveling he did with his host family.

DESCRIBE THE HOUSING SITUATION: That was the best part. I lived with a host family, who kind of absorbed me into their family. I even called them mom and dad, grandma and grandpa. I had chores I was expected to do, they gave me a curfew, and they expected me to study. They also had a five-year old son, and I learned a lot of Japanese from him.

GREATEST CHALLENGE: The hardest thing is there's so much English everywhere. You go there to learn Japanese, but they want to learn English. It was hard to approach people because you want to speak Japanese, and they spoke English to you.

EXPERIENCES WITH CULTURE SHOCK OR REVERSE CULTURE

SHOCK: The food, in both ways. I had rice everyday, which was hard to get used to. I lost 25 pounds. But then when I came back to the US, I couldn't eat sweet stuff. I had a Mountain Dew at the airport, and I thought, ewwww, that's too sweet.

COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE: IF I COULD DO IT OVER, I WOULD ... not have worried about grades as much as I did. I really stressed about grades. I could have had more free time to learn about the city.

WHAT YOU KNOW NOW THAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE GOING

ABROAD: I learned that once you get there and absorb the culture, you learn the language much better than you thought you would. You shouldn't have inhibitions about speaking the language.

"I think you definitely need to study abroad. If you don't, you won't realize what other cultures are all about, and you won't really understand yours either."

FACT ABOUT JAPAN THAT YOU THINK PEOPLE WOULD BE SURPRISED TO

LEARN: They are really into land utilization. There's only one or two rivers in Japan that do not have a dam. And Japanese people don't eat sushi everyday.