

## JAPAN: Fukuoka

June 30, 2016



First impressions: This photograph was taken from the airplane and shows part of Fukuoka city from far away. With a population of a little over 1.5 million people, Fukuoka city is nicely organized and has a lot to offer with Japanese culture, delicious food, kind people, and more.

Japan is well known for their service and wonderful hospitality. My arrival was no exception. I was greeted with a warm welcome from Mr. Abiru and 7 other students early morning in Fukuoka airport.

We went close to Gion subway station to the condo I would stay during my time in Fukuoka. In some western homes it is common to walk in with your outside shoes inside the house. In Japan and other Asian countries, you must take them off. Shoes are full of bacteria and toxins from outside, so logically taking them off makes sense.



Asia has a reputation for being exotic in Westerner's eyes, however, Japan is heard to be the one of the most unique countries out of Asia. This is obviously seen simply by walking around the streets of the city. Construction was being done next to the sidewalk and the Japanese animated cat known worldwide as Hello Kitty, was placed next to the construction zone.



It is common to see something more similar to the typical orange and white cones. The purpose of them is to grab the attention of the pedestrian while the area is undergoing construction. Hello Kitty certainly grabbed my attention so in the end, it essentially fulfilled its purpose just as a traditional orange cone would.



There is nothing better than visiting a city with local people. If it wasn't for these wonderful students, I would have never been able to find this delicious restaurant known for their tempura.

Ordering from here was different from what I have ever experienced. There was a machine of buttons (all in Japanese) that had the type of tempura sets you could order from. I put money in the machine and got a small paper ticket that I had to place in front of where I was sitting. All of the orders came with miso soup and a bowl of rice. The only thing given to eat the food was chopsticks. No signs of spoons, forks, or knives whatsoever.

I was curious of how I was supposed to eat the miso soup since I didn't have a spoon so I waited and observed until one of my new Japanese friends did. In Western culture, it would be a lack of manners to lift your soup up and drink it as if it were water. In Japan however, this is the way everyone does it.

The service in this local restaurant amazed me. Every tempura was served fresh from the minute it came out from the pan to the plate. The chef went from person to person around the table, looked at you, and then told you what he was serving you.

Satoka was very kind and sent me a picture with the name of all the side dishes from the table. I never knew I liked raw squid until that day!



After lunch, I went to a shrine and I was taught to wash my hands before entering, throw a coin, ring the bell, bow down two times, clap two times, and then bow down again. We went to the side of the shrine where there were fortune papers. Of course all of it was in Japanese and I was glad to have my Japanese friends next to me to read it for me. I learned that if it is a good fortune, you keep it. However, if it is bad, you go to the side and tie it to a rope along with the other negative fortunes. Lucky for me, mine was good so I was able to keep it!

Later that day, I visited Fukuoka University. The organization of the students is certainly something I admire. They organize their own meetings and make group discussions where everyone can input something and every

opinion is valid. I have gained a lot of respect for Japanese students because they keep themselves busy from the morning until the evening. From what I observe, students are not shy and are not judged on their ideas. I was at meetings from 4pm until 8:30 pm, and some students stayed even longer for another one. Instead of one person telling everyone what to do, the students work together and bring out the best ideas amongst each other, combine them, and then create one strong plan.

With just a glimpse of the Japanese lifestyle, I can see that they have an effective and efficient way of learning making Japan such a powerful and admirable country.

This concludes my summary of Thursday, June 30 2016 Fukuoka Japan!