

CET Japan, Fall 2022 | Anonymous

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Who are the intended audience(s) of your Perspective Piece? "Students seeking to get a new perspective on life through travel."

Traveling to Discover

When I first came up with the idea to study abroad in Japan, it was after fighting tooth and nail to come as a traveler first. It always seemed like something was standing in my way, until eight years later, when I finally arrived. My goal was to go to another country and have my horizons broadened. I thought that somehow, going abroad would inspire to finally kickstart the life I had always wanted to live. People always told me about how they, and people they know, all changed after traveling abroad. For me, the definition of changed has become different from when I first left the United States.

I am making it sound like I didn't achieve my goal of gaining inspiration. I absolutely did, but it was in unexpected ways. During my time in Osaka Japan, I went through several severe stretches of depression. Being away from family made me feel that time was short, and I would lose them soon. It made me question my goals while also reaffirming my determination to follow my dreams. I went through so many phases while in Japan that sometimes, I felt like I hadn't changed at all.

I learned how to speak in Japanese far better than I ever could. I am now confident enough to take my mother around in even remote areas while utilizing the language skills I've learned. I could do nothing like that before my program. Language skills aside, what would I need them for? I thought that I would want to live in Japan after the program, but I learned very quickly that if you don't have a group of friends or loved one's already planning to move to Japan alongside you, Japan is a very lonely place. I knew this coming in, and a part of me desperately hoped that I would make life-long connections. I might have made those friendships, but certainly not with living in Japan in mind. I took a big blow on the image of my future that I had. At the same time, I think it gave me clarity. I needed to set myself up for half a year after leaving Japan first. I needed to move to where I really wanted to live. I needed to grasp the friends I have at home and really dedicate myself to the life I made. Some people don't realize that they already crafted a wonderful life with all of their sweat and tears over the years, and think they need to do even more by discovering themselves abroad. Please do, but remember that you have already accomplished the world. And if you haven't, then you are sure to find something amazing here in Japan.

I am writing this on the last night in my CET housing apartment. From here, I will go to Kyoto and meet my mother to have the trip I promised that we would go on over eight years ago. No matter what I learned with all of my classmates during my study abroad experience, I think this trip with someone who loves me unconditionally will be what I remember the most. If my classmates taught me anything, though, its that I was more acceptable to others than I really believed. If you can, please go to that silly gathering on the awkward Wednesday night. Please go on the impromptu trip to the next city over to see the sights. When your trip is over, you will look back and think, "I never missed an opportunity to enjoy the energy of others."

On the other hand, I learned the importance of allowing yourself to do nothing. You do not have to set the world on fire every single day while abroad. There is time, and you will get where you want to go, but don't guilt yourself out of that much needed nap or that evening alone in your room with a movie. Everyone has those days, and you don't want to burn yourself out too fast. Enjoy your time and don't feel like you have to squeeze the life out of your stay.

If I could summarize this, here is what I would say. Come to Japan and see its heart. Don't be afraid to scratch the surface. Take your time and follow a whim here and there. Class is important, but remember not to chain yourself down. When you're done, take your experiences with you and use that energy to make your next step in life.

Thank you for reading this rather emotional piece. My purpose of coming here was emotional from the beginning, so I had to write to those who may share my feelings and goals. It is all possible, and Japan is the most beautiful place to be while you solve the maze in your head.

P.S. - If you get a chance, seek out Eiheiji Temple in Fukui. It's in the mountains Northwest of Kyoto. If the city feels a bit too much like home, going here and seeing the countryside will be a whole new experience.