

## INTRO

I have dreamt of going to Japan for over 10 years. The rich culture, poetic language, and amazing food has caused my mind to spiral into a Japan-obsessed frenzy. I began to learn the language, cook traditional Japanese food, and even watched NHK news hour to get immersed in the country's affairs. One question was on my mind: when can I go?

This summer of 2024, my wish finally came true. I was provided with the opportunity to study abroad in Japan. The people I met, the places I saw, and the food I ate was exactly as I hoped it would be. These are my memoirs of Japan. This is how Japan fundamentally changed me.

INSERT: TITLE, MUSIC

The most notable thing I took away from this entire experience is CHANGE. And I don't mean that I just got culture shock or have a new thing to brag about. No, I mean that experiencing Japanese culture changed the way I view the world and myself.

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I have become more reserved. While in Japan, I seemed to easily align myself with traditional values, such as social harmony and a respect for nature. Japan is well known for its reserved culture and quietness as a society.

"The Japanese historically lived in close-knit farming communities that valued collective goals over individual pursuits. People lived close together in wooden houses with walls that were literally paper thin. It was common for communities to bathe together in sento baths. You saw your neighbours naked and lived in close proximity to them.

As a result, privacy became a skill. The Japanese have an incredible ability to establish their own personal space in the most crowded of conditions. Even in the crush of a rush hour Tokyo train, people seem to enjoy a little quiet time in their own little bubble of privacy."

INSERT: QUOTE SOURCE

[<https://medium.com/@kiyoshimatsumoto/the-japanese-concept-of-personal-space-8a9021920ece>]

I attempted to respect public spaces and the people around me by not being noisy, especially on the train, and being aware of my surroundings so as to not disrupt others or bring attention to myself.

I was so inspired by the restraint Japanese culture has, I wanted to apply this to my life in America. It feels like such a respectful way of life, not only for others, but for myself as well.

I also noticed that I respect nature in different ways than I have before. A core moment from the trip was the first park we went to in Abiko.

It was a vast sea of green grass and camphor trees, being teased by the light warm breeze. The further we walked, the more expansive the land became until we came across a field of poppy flowers which dazzled in red and orange spots, contrasted against every other color.

And the big thing I noticed: not a single piece of trash on the ground. Anywhere.

INSERT: ABIKO FOOTAGE

Nature in Japan feels healthy because the locals do their part to take care of it. Because of this, I now try extra hard to reduce purchasing items that cannot be recycled.

Experiencing minimalism in the Japanese lifestyle has also motivated me to change. America is criminally known for the hustle and grind mindset, but I just don't resonate with that. I have donated a lot of my unneeded belongings, and I am trying to focus more on the nature around me as opposed to the stuff I own.

Also, in no way am I trying to attack grind culture or consumerism culture, this is purely what I took away as an American visiting Japan.

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Ok, this is a big thing that made me change. The concept of WABI-SABI. My understanding of peace and time. If you do not know, wabi-sabi is "a concept that motions us to constantly search for the beauty in imperfection and accept the more natural cycle of life.

It reminds us that all things including us and life itself, are impermanent, incomplete, and imperfect. Perfection, then, is impossible and impermanence is the only way." You can read more about it through the link in the description.

INSERT: QUOTE SOURCE:

[<https://www.omaritani.com/blog/wabi-sabi-philosophy-teachings>]

America, unfortunately, does not value this mindset, and after returning from my study abroad experience, it is shocking to see that nobody slows down or takes time to breathe. Japan has taught me how to enjoy the peace around me and not let my work or responsibilities take hold of my life.

For example, while I was there, I had the opportunity to participate in a calligraphy class. Methodically, the calligraphy master showed us how to properly write with the traditional tools.

The long, elegant bamboo and horse hair brush, the black ink that bubbled as it was poured into the old clay dish. The tactful swish of the wrist as he made his strokes. Calculating, mindful. It was beautiful to watch. And it solidified my desire to slow down.

When I got to try it out for myself, I really felt at peace. I was in tune with myself and the world around me. While in Japan in general, might I add, I had no anxiety in any form. But upon my return to America, the anxiety has returned.

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Moving on, I also noticed that I have changed my opinions on traveling. I love to travel and have already experienced cultures different from my own, but none of them were even close to Japan.

The cultural experiences I had and the people I met inspires me to explore new places by immersing myself in the culture instead of just being a tourist. I feel much more accomplished with what I learned and experienced in Japan compared to if I had just taken pictures and gone solely to tourist attractions.

I share this resolve with you all not as advice or a message to change your own perspectives. But, simply because I appreciate what Japan has provided to me on a deeper level. This is an ode to my experiences.

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One final aspect of my trip I will mention is that I went there to film a documentary. I was tasked with documenting a traditional tea ceremony guided by a tea master. You can find the link to this documentary on my channel.

INSERT: CLIPS FROM DOC

This made my trip even better.

Filming a documentary in Japan broadened my understanding of what travel can be. Gaining that experience in film while also meeting the tea master and other members of that ceremony was once in a life time. I usually make fiction films, but I now even have a new appreciation for documentary.

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Overall, Japan was a very positive experience for me and I have taken away a lot of new values and concepts. Of course, not every day was great and I, like anyone, had underwhelming or uncomfortable moments.

But, I cherish the experience of immersing myself into a different culture, and I look forward to returning to Japan in the future. The good I took away from it is a powerful inspiration for future travel, filmmaking, and cultural immersion. As it was only a two week trip, this was just a taste.

INSERT: OUTRO SCREEN

I hope I was able to give a little insight into Japan and the experiences I took away from it. Change is good, whether it is something small like experiencing a new culture, or altering your state of being to live more authentically to yourself like I have. What ever you take away from this video, I hope it inspires you in the same ways I have been.

Thank you all so much for watching, and if you liked my video please show some support with a like and subscribe. You can find more videos on my channel, including the documentary and other short films on Japan.