

# Japanese excited by rural New Zealand

By Caron

Over the past two weeks families from Matamata, Cambridge and Morrinsville had the opportunity to host Japanese students from Ikubunkan School in Tokyo. The 58 students were thrilled to have the opportunity to experience rural New Zealand to both enhance their understanding of the English language, and experience our culture and lifestyle.

Matamata College Homestay Coordinator, Denise Williams, was extremely appreciative of the support shown by local families and says feedback has been terrific. "It was lovely to read the students feedback forms and find they had thoroughly enjoyed their time here" she says. "Many of our families took the opportunity of introducing new experiences to the Japanese students such as beach visits, nature walks and even milking cows. For many of us as New Zealanders, it's easy to take for granted the beauty, simplicity and more laid back type of lifestyle we were born into - especially in comparison to the hectic and heavily populated environment they come from."

From a host family point of view too, hosting the international students is an opportunity to appreciate the differences between the two countries. "We were told to treat the students as we would members of our own family" said one host, "and it was interesting to

see them delighted at some of what we consider the small things. Taking photos of their evening meal for example, initially seemed a little odd but when they explained how different their diet was - I guess in a similar situation, we would be inclined to do the same!"

As well as being part of a local family for almost two weeks, Japanese students were delighted that a few sightseeing days had been incorporated into their itinerary. "Hobbiton was very special" said Kaigo Suzuki. "After seeing the movie it didn't seem real walking the land where it was filmed - and was an experience I will always treasure." They also enjoyed a tour through Tatua Dairy factory, had the opportunity of souvenir shopping, and a good look around the community. "Everything was very nice" said Kaigo, "and not crowded like it is at home. People everywhere were so friendly and always smiling!"

With short term school visits scheduled a couple of times per year, Denise is always happy to hear from locals who would like to host an international student. "Of course we also have students from a variety of countries that come to New Zealand for half or full year education so whether its short or long term, if hosting is something you have considered, feel free to contact me for further information." Denise can be contacted at homestay@matamatacollege.school.nz.



It may have been just two weeks but many of the Ikubunkan School students from Tokyo, Japan, formed new friendships and were very sad to say goodbye to their Matamata families.



Boarded and ready to return home, students are pictured farewelling Matamata College, their host families and their rural New Zealand experience.

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