

## My End of Year Presentation

Today I would like to talk to you about my year abroad, which, without exaggeration has been one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life so far. I've had the opportunity to travel to various prefectures and Islands in Japan, eat slightly too much of the local delicacies, make new friends from all over the world and of course I have also deepened my knowledge and understanding of Japanese.

When I first arrived in Japan I felt unconfident in my ability to speak the language well, so daily life was a challenge for me, from trying to understand kanji to the hundreds of new words I was hearing around me every day. However, as I progressed through the year everything seemed to get easier as I attended my Japanese lessons and used daily encounters to hone my speaking and listening skills. Of course, there is still much for me to learn but now I feel like I have a solid base to build on. I also believe travelling around the country really helped me in this capacity as the further away from Tokyo I travelled the less English I seemed to encounter and the more I had to rely on my knowledge of Japanese.



I was fortunate enough to visit many places including; Hakone, Yokohama, Kusatsu Onsen, Okinawa, Osaka, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Kamakura and Enoshima and Nikko. Each of these places was original and appeared to have its own unique culture. I have to say I believe my favourite cultural experience was attending the yearly sumo competition with my fellow exchange student Niina.

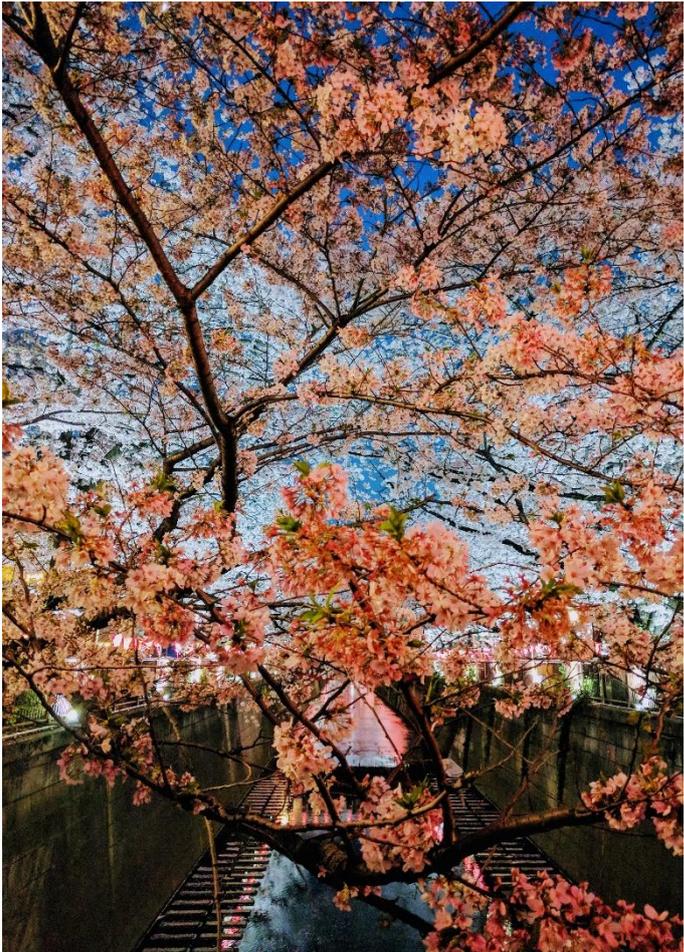
Held in the famous *Ryogoku* building we spent several hours intrigued in this traditional sport which provided us with an extremely enjoyable day out. In addition to travelling around and attending cultural events another highlight of my year has been the support from Ochanomizu University.

The teachers at Ochanomizu have been kind and supportive throughout my year and have always operated with the upmost understanding. The classes have been varied and interesting and so have the staff.

Overall, Japan is full of natural beauty and is utterly compelling. I haven't even left yet, and I already can't wait to come back.

Zara Gilder

Grand Hyatt Hotel



日光