

I did it! I've been in Japan for more than one year now, and to celebrate, this afternoon I'm getting on my first international flight since July of last year. In short, I'm going home today!!!

I can't believe that I've already been here for a year. At first, things went by really slowly, but after a few months in Japan, time started to fly by. We have a saying in English that, "time flies when you're having fun." I think it's true! When I think about my friends and family at home, I have mixed feelings. Sometimes it seems like I graduated from college just yesterday, and I forget that it's actually been almost a year and a half since I've seen most of my friends or my grandparents. On the other hand, there are times when I feel like I've been gone for years.

I read over my old journals today because it's a good way to remember how I felt when I was just starting out in Japan. Luckily for me, I had a really positive attitude. Even when there were lots of typhoons, earthquakes, bugs and other bad things to get used to, I always tried to see the funny or entertaining side of things. Even so, sometimes it would have been nice to just get out of here and go home! I remember writing my journals at Christmas and Thanksgiving, and wondering what my family's holiday celebrations would be like without me. It was hard missing out on all of that and staying in Japan, but I did it! I'm happy that I didn't go home during a stressful time in Japan. When things seemed overwhelming and I was still getting used to life in Japan, a visit to the United States might have been dangerous. I'm afraid that if I had gone home at Christmas, I might have just wanted to stay.

Now is the perfect time for me to visit home. I'm not going home because I am unhappy here or need a break from life in Japan—I'm just going home because my friends and family want to see me, and I want to see them, too! It will be nice to enjoy the parts of American life that are so different from life in Japan, eat all my favorite foods and just understand EVERYTHING that is written or said to me everywhere I go. I'm just happy that that's not the reason I'm going home. I think it will be much easier to enjoy my time at home knowing that I have a home here in Japan to come back to. I might even be *almost* as excited to come back to Japan as I am to go home. I'll be sure to tell you all about it when I get back!