

A few weeks ago, my mom came to visit me in Japan. Since my parents came to visit together last year, and my mom has been to Japan several other times as well, this was a unique visit. Instead of spending time in Kyoto, Nara, or other typical tourist spots, this time we didn't visit any of those places. The main reason that my mom came to Japan in January was to see an International Quilt Exhibition in Tokyo, so we decided to go and spend 5 days there together. It was the first time that I had gone to Tokyo just for fun, and I wasn't sure how I would like it.

I've been to Tokyo several times, when I stayed in Shinjuku for Orientation and another conference since I came to Japan as an ALT. But these trips were always so busy with meetings, workshops and other planned activities that I only had a few hours of free time at night, and didn't get to see much of the city. This time, my mom and I planned to stay in a small ryokan in the northeast part of the city and to explore the area as much as possible. Of course we went to places like Shibuya and Asakusa, where there are a lot of foreigners. But we also visited different places like Kichijyoji and Nippori Textile Town, where we found a lot of interesting neighborhoods with small shops, galleries and cafes. It was great.

I like living in a city, but I have never been able to picture myself living in a huge city like New York, Paris or Tokyo. I have enjoyed living in Washington DC and also in Lyon, France, and thought that those smaller cities were perfect for me. Maybe this is why I was so surprised to go to Tokyo and really feel at home there. In places like Kichikyoji, it felt like a big city but there was so much character and so many interesting small places that I felt like I could have stayed and started a life there. Especially after enjoying life in Tsu for the last year and a half, I did not expect to feel such a connection to the big city, but I definitely did!

I think part of the reason I enjoyed it so much was because we had the time to get to know the trains and the different areas of the city before we left. It was great to spend the day hopping on and off of trains, going wherever we wanted to go so easily. Cities are great! I went to Tokyo assuming that it would be fun, but overwhelming and that I would be happy to come home. Though I'm happy to be back, it was definitely hard to leave. Who knows when I'll have the chance to go back and spend time in Tokyo again. I'm really happy that I at least had this time where I got to know the city and at the same time was surprised to learn some things about myself. Maybe if I'm lucky I'll have the chance to live in Tokyo in the future. Anything could happen!